

Univerzita Karlova – Filozofická fakulta

Ústav anglofonních literatur a kultur



**"Why am I trying to become what I don't want to be?" The Corrupted American
Dream in the Selected Arthur Miller's and Tennessee Williams's Dramas**

**"Proč se pořád pachtím za něčím, co nechci být?" Zkorumpovaný americký sen ve
vybraných dramatech Arthura Millera a Tennesseeho Williamse**

Diplomová práce

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Prague, 9 August 2021

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Souhlasím se zapůjčením diplomové práce ke studijním účelům.

I have no objections to the MA thesis being borrowed and used for study purposes.

Abstract

In my thesis, I focused on the challenges of the American Dream and its damaging demands. I compared these aspects to *The Glass Menagerie*, *All My Sons*, and *Death of the Salesman*, plays by Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller, two playwrights concerned with similar issues in the 1940s and 1950s. Each chapter was introduced by Robert Frost's poem related to its topic. This element was added as a chapters' introduction to express the universality of the depicted issues and to tight the sections together under one pattern.

In the theoretical part of the thesis, I concentrated on the 40s and 50s America and its features and the historical development of the American Dream. This section's main influences were works by Rodney P. Carlisle, Richard A. Schwartz, Stephanie Coontz, and Jim Cullen. With their books about America and its historical background, Carlisle, Schwartz, and Coontz provided a base for the factual context of this thesis. Cullen's work on the American Dream was used as the primary source for understanding the reasons behind the Dream and its historical development.

The whole thesis was supported by arguments from Lauren Berlant, John W. Thoburn and Thomas L. Sexton, and Piotr Sztompka. Berlant's work on *cruel optimism* provided a possible explanation of particular behavior that accompanied the journey of achieving the American Dream. Together with Thoburn and Sexton's work, Sztompka served to connect the psychological demeanor patterns.

In the first chapter, I described the historical background of the 1940s and 50s in connection with its effects on individuals and society. The second chapter first depicted the American Dream's development, then the exact manifestation in the two decades mentioned above.

In the second part of this thesis, I aimed to connect three issues reappearing in the three dramas coming from the challenges in the 40s and 50s plus the elusiveness of the Dream. In the last three chapters, motifs of repression or denial, the influence of past times, and separation were presented, and through them, the impact on the characters and the families was shown.

The third chapter focused on family and its challenges, and the arguments from Goleman's book were used in this, but also the fourth chapter, which portrayed the issue of maladaptive daydreaming. The last chapter dealt with the problem of money and argumentations from Housel's book were used. The fifth part explored the relationship and influence of money on the breadwinners of the three families.

As a result, the main difference between the authors from this perspective is that while Miller's male characters commit suicide because, for them, this is the most logical way out, Williams' male characters preserve their lives but doom the others by their abrupt getaway. Through the death and disappearance, both authors depict men who leave the burdens - their families - behind while fleeing from the current living conditions. Women and children show certain problematic behavior as well due to their inability to react accordingly to the current life's challenges and deal healthily with the past. These escaping methods are caused or motivated by the constructed values of the American Dream.

Key words: Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, the American Dream, family, daydreaming, money, separation, dysfunctionality, distrust.

Abstrakt

Ve své diplomové práci jsem se zaměřila na americký sen a jeho zničující nároky. Porovnávala jsem tyto aspekty na hrách *Skleněný zvěřinec*, *Všichni moji synové* a *Smrt obchodního cestujícího* od Tennesseeho Williamse a Arthura Millera, dvou dramatiků zabývajících se podobnými problémy ve 40. a 50. letech dvacátého století. Každá kapitola byla uvedena básní Roberta Frosta týkající se daného tématu. Tento prvek byl přidán jako uvedení kapitol, aby se zdůraznila univerzálnost znázorněné problematiky a aby se části spojily pod jedním vzorem.

V teoretické části práce jsem se soustředila na Ameriku ve 40. a 50. letech a její rysy a historický vývoj amerického snu. Hlavní vliv na tyto kapitoly měli autoři Rodney P. Carlisle, Richard A. Schwartz, Stephanie Coontz a Jim Cullen. Carlisle, Schwartz a Coontz poskytli základ pro faktický kontext této práce svými knihami o Americe a jejím historickém pozadí. Jako primární zdroj pro pochopení důvodů, které stojí za snem a jeho historickým vývojem, bylo použito Cullenovo dílo o americkém snu.

Celá práce byla podpořena argumenty Lauren Berlantové, Johna W. Thoburna a Thomase L. Sextona a Piotra Sztompka. Berlantina práce o *krutém optimismu* poskytla možné vysvětlení konkrétního chování, které doprovázelo cestu k dosažení amerického snu. Spolu s díly Thoburna a Sextona posloužil Sztompka k propojení psychologických vzorců chování.

V první kapitole jsem popsala historické pozadí 40. a 50. let v souvislosti s jeho dopady na jednotlivce a společnost. Druhá kapitola nejprve popisovala vývoj amerického snu, poté jeho přesný projev ve dvou výše uvedených desetiletích.

Ve druhé části této práce jsem se zaměřila na propojení tří problematik vycházejících z výzev ve 40. a 50. letech a nepolapitelnosti Snu, které se opakovaně objevovaly ve třech dramatech.

Motivy represe nebo popírání, vliv minulosti a odloučení byly představeny ve posledních třech kapitolách a prostřednictvím nich byl znázorněn dopad na postavy a rodiny.

Třetí kapitola se zaměřila na rodinu a její výzvy a argumenty z Golemanovy knihy byly použity v této, ale také ve čtvrté kapitole, která zobrazila otázku maladaptivního snění. Poslední kapitola se zabývala problémem peněz a byly zde použity argumenty z Houselovy knihy. Pátá část zkoumala vztah a vliv peněz na živitele tří rodin.

Výsledkem je, že hlavní rozdíl mezi autory z této perspektivy spočívá v tom, že zatímco Millerovy mužské postavy spáchají sebevraždu, protože je to pro ně nejlogičtější cesta ven, Williamsovy mužské postavy si zachovávají život, ale odsoudí ostatní svým náhlým útekem. Smrtí a zmizením oba autoři vyobrazují muže, kteří, zatímco prchají před současnými životními podmínkami, za sebou zanechávají svá břemena – své rodiny. Ženy a děti, v důsledku jejich neschopnosti reagovat odpovídajícím způsobem na aktuální životní výzvy a zdravě se vyrovnávat s minulostí, také vykazují určité problematické chování. Tyto metody úniku jsou způsobeny nebo motivovány zkonstruovanými hodnotami amerického snu.

Klíčová slova: Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Americký sen, rodina, denní snění, peníze, odloučení, dysfunkčnost, nedůvěra.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. The 1940s and 1950s USA.....	10
1.1 <i>The Role of the Timeline</i>	10
1.2 <i>The Role of Society and Social Groups</i>	13
1.3 <i>The Role of the Mind</i>	19
2. The American Dream	23
2.1 <i>Inception and Evolution</i>	23
2.2 <i>The Dream in the 1940s and 50s</i>	28
2.2.1 <i>The Spotless Family</i>	29
2.2.2 <i>Defensive Daydreaming in Fantasy Lands</i>	34
2.2.3 <i>Money as a Bitter Bellwether</i>	36
3. The Spotless Family	39
3.1 <i>The Glass Menagerie</i>	41
3.2 <i>All My Sons</i>	45
3.3 <i>Death of a Salesman</i>	49
4. Defensive Daydreaming in Fantasy Lands.....	54
4.1 <i>The Glass Menagerie</i>	57
4.2 <i>All My Sons</i>	62
4.3 <i>Death of a Salesman</i>	66
5. Money as a Bitter Bellwether	69
5.1 <i>The Glass Menagerie</i>	71
5.2 <i>All My Sons</i>	74
5.3 <i>Death of a Salesman</i>	77
Conclusion	81
Bibliography	85

1. The 1940s and 1950s USA

Having invented a new Holocaust,
And been the first with it to win a war,
How they make haste to cry with fingers crossed,
King's X--no fairs to use it anymore!¹

Robert Frost's poem *U.S. 1946 King's X* suits as a perfect introduction to the 1940s and 1950s in the United States. Only with a few lines, Frost expresses his thoughts about the postwar atomic age and presents a solid and rather negative opening for further descriptions of these two decades that delimit Miller's and Williams' three dramas. These four lines ground the fact that the overall situation in the United States after World War II was underlined with feelings of newly regained freedom together with remorse about the war losses and new threats connected to nuclear power and communism. The 1940s and 1950s were years of economic prosperity and growing production, focusing on families and the living situation of American citizens. These two periods were influenced by past and present; thus, in this chapter, these two decades will be analyzed in the light of historical, sociological, and psychological development.

1.1 The Role of the Timeline

The 1940s and 1950s in America were both influenced by consequences of the war and the threat of communism; therefore, the United States and its citizens lived in the postwar times affected by not only to the ongoing fear of the war conflicts but also, in contrast, prosperity on

¹Robert Frost, *The Collected Poems of Robert Frost*, ed. Edward Connery Lathem (London: Vintage Books, 2013), 399.

the industrial field and post-war euphoria. These different emotions and impacts caused by the world war affected American citizens and might create chaotic relationships between people and problematic understanding of life in general. Many people started to search for some identification within this renewed society, new beginnings or wanted to return to the old habits. The postwar times were indeed contrasting and challenging; therefore, some structural changes and adaptation in the daily lives were needed. In general, these two decades were influenced by the shadow of the Second World War; hence, confusion, adjustments, and changes in many spheres of the human world were necessary and logical; further, prosperity and development came out from the forties and fifties as well, and various innovations were introduced. Overall, life in the postwar times was complex, hectic, and demanding.

Industrial development was strongly connected to the war and then postwar demand for consumer goods. It positively affected the financial situation because from 1940 up to 1960, together with employment and higher incomes, American Gross National Product amplified its size. Aspirations and motivation grew bigger as well, and Americans increased consumption, productivity, and their numbers with the Baby Boom generations.² During the postwar periods, residents in America underwent many changes in all spheres of life; thus, new problems and challenges connected to work, living standards, or unstable atomic situation in the world appeared. Nevertheless, the feeling of euphoria engorged the lands of the USA and brought a new stream of energy into the lives of Americans.

In his book, Schwartz argues that these mixed feelings of triumph and anxiety are hugely incorporated in postwar film productions;³ also, cultural development and its influence could not be unnoticed. The traces of confusion about the current situation are visible even in

² Rodney P. Carlisle, *Handbook to Life in America: Postwar America, 1950 to 1969* (New York: Facts On File, 2009), 9.

³ Richard A. Schwartz, *An Eyewitness History: The 1950s* (New York: Facts On File, 2003), 18.

theatrical productions from those periods. Schwartz talks about a shift in theatrical works - from "lighthearted comedy to serious drama."⁴ This turn and its challenges in postwar times are depicted in Williams's and Miller's three dramas. Euphoria and motivation, plus fear and instability, emerged when the spread of materiality and massive industrial expansion covered the USA.

The forties in America are marked as a prosperous era mainly because it can be described as "the decade when Depression turns into prosperity, when disillusionment gives way to optimism, when want yields to plenty — and when domestic peace is shattered by world war."⁵ Americans needed recuperation after the war. Also, there was an inclination to collect and re-organize all the remaining things that survived the fighting periods. The fear and shocks haunted the end-of-the-war euphoria, and the postwar times were the much-needed rehabilitation for all people. The death of illusion and tragic reality were intermingled with the industrial growth and new lifestyles in the USA.⁶ The rebuilding processes went from the spread and development of suburbs, car boom in the form of massive vehicle production and demand for them, to higher birth rate. These expansions suffused Americans and their everyday lives and changed the overall conditions of middle-class citizens.⁷ After the years of depression, this positive twist was more than welcomed, and enthusiasm gave inspiration to many people in the work field, which was visible through the renewed passion for establishing a better life for their families. Standards went higher, and the idea of the American Dream and its pleasures and accomplishments quickly walked back into American society. Economy and industry were growing together, and just like the authors from History.com summarize:

⁴ Schwartz, *An Eyewitness*, 22.

⁵Philip Gerard, "The 1940s: The Decade of Transformation," *Our State*, published December 07, 2017, <https://www.ourstate.com/the-1940s-the-decade-of-transformation/>.

⁶ Jacqueline Foertsch, *American Culture in the 1940s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 201.

⁷ Carlisle, *Handbook*, 25, 227-8.

The United States was the world's strongest military power. Its economy was booming, and the fruits of this prosperity—new cars, suburban houses and other consumer goods—were available to more people than ever before. However, the 1950s were also an era of great conflict. For example, the nascent civil rights movement and the crusade against communism at home and abroad exposed the underlying divisions in American society.⁸

Therefore, as mentioned several times before, the postwar times were rather chaotic in settling again and finding ways through the renewed prewar life conditions. The increase of home supplies, cars, and other daily equipment brought renovation and prosperity. Nevertheless, the need for more and better material things crawled into the minds of Americans. Daily life turned into consumerism and a hunt for a capital increase. Many families were engaging in social group activities, extending their awareness of the world around them⁹ where people either got closer or created walls of differences and rejection. The happiness and advantages in all the new machines influenced lives in both good and bad ways, partly because it created walls between people with different incomes. Financial inequality was marked by homeownership and brand-new cars. Further, the threat of communism and the postwar instability had a powerful influence,¹⁰ and people might have a hard time incorporating themselves as functional individuals or parts of some group in the freshly rebuilt American society.¹¹

1.2 The Role of Society and Social Groups

⁸ History.Com Editors, "The 1950s," *History*, last updated April 17, 2020, <https://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/1950s>.

⁹ Carlisle, *Handbook*, 21.

¹⁰ "the uncertain political situation in the late 1940s, the climate of suspicion spawned by the Red Scare, and the new threats posed by atomic weaponry thus tempered postwar optimism with a foreboding feeling that at some deeper, unseen level, all was not well." From Schwartz, *An Eyewitness*, 3.

¹¹ Carlisle, *Handbook to Life*, 22.

The postwar situation connected people on a different level but also created walls of alienation. Just like Putman writes in his book, "trustworthiness lubricates social life."¹² According to the Cambridge Dictionary, trustworthiness is "the quality or fact of being trustworthy."¹³ During the war, trustworthiness got a different power when soldiers and other war zone participants experienced the full, active power of relying on somebody or even being the ones who have to be the trustworthy persons. Back home and in the war zones, Americans had to trust their government and military power. Relying on others or some leadership, people generally put their trust and almost fully depend on "humanly created systems" because of the uncertainty of the future. The problem with something unknown in the unclear future leads people into the stage of trusting somebody or something because it creates hope inside them.¹⁴

America in the postwar times was filled with high engagement in social and political affairs because these were the places where the uncertainty of the future could be controlled, even if a little bit. They won the war, built their politics, and created opportunities as a nation; the trust towards the country and their fellow citizens proved to be secure and beneficial, therefore, safe to hold on to.¹⁵ However, families that suffered during the war might have problems with social and political trust.¹⁶ Postwar reactions and social responses differed; still, the U.S. publicly projected and promoted only the positive aspects, which created the illusion of the golden age.¹⁷

¹² Robert D. Putman, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 31, Apple Books.

¹³ Cambridge Dictionary, "trustworthiness," *Cambridge University Press*, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/trustworthiness?q=trustworthiness+>.

¹⁴ Piotr Sztompka, *Trust: A Sociological Theory* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 19-20.

¹⁵ Putman, *Bowling*, 21.

¹⁶ Pauline Grosjean, "How WWII shaped political and social trust in the long run," *Vox EU*, published September 09, 2019. <https://voxeu.org/article/how-wwii-shaped-political-and-social-trust-long-run>.

¹⁷ Putman, *Bowling*, 20-21.

Everywhere in the U.S., there were encouraging posters and TV sitcoms through which the government was promising good jobs and a better life. Therefore, many people started to focus on fulfilling those dreams that were supposed to be reachable to everybody and hiding within groups rather than healing their minds or dealing with the real problems - the attention switched towards the materialism and work-related dreams and people saw that as the only way how to reach happiness for themselves and/or their families. The issue of trusting somebody on a deeper level occurred and created boundaries within family members or individuals and society. The war separated families and shattered the general trust between humans, which caused dysfunction within the family circle and society in general. In his book, Sztompka defines trust as an essential factor in social groups:

Other people and their actions make up the most important environment of our life and those are the crucial targets of our own actions. We have at least to coexist with others, to coordinate our actions with them, and, in more advanced stages of human society, to cooperate with them. The problem with the social environment is that it possesses a particularly large degree of uncertainty and uncontrollability.¹⁸

Connecting this definition with the war legacy, which was predominantly in the 1940s too raw, the problem of shallow relationships and connections between people might occur. Furthermore, when there is no trust and trustworthiness, the industry-thriving society still suffers due to the lack of relations between people. In such a way, distrust, comparing, and jealousy appeared in the material-based postwar America.

In the 1950s, society more or less settled in the renewed nation, people started to look for ways how to incorporate themselves into the thriving society - they tried to rebuild the trust between other humans. One feasibility was forming organizations, and in such manner, a fresh

¹⁸ Sztompka, *Trust*, 21-22.

generation of joiners on the male side of the population appeared with a desire to get together with others. As a result, not only men started to form legions, support groups, or religious and other communities.¹⁹ These formations brought people together; however, they could also eliminate some individuals and create even bigger boundaries. Families were the core focus; thus, the idea of rooting one's identity in gender and parental roles in the family dominated the social and also national aims, especially in the 1950s.²⁰ Correspondingly, one of the measures of value in postwar times were the family conditions. Either there was a well-functioning family (even if only on the surface), or there were individuals or broken families. The last two were connected to instability, thus something unwanted, because the 1940s were about regaining stability and surveillance. In the 1950s, it all came together under "a culture of conformity, expanding home ownership, and a widespread admiration for and emulation of a middle-class lifestyle."²¹

The unstable echoes of wartime were decreasing, and, in the forties, the atmosphere in America started to be more stress-free and stable. People began to share more with each other and put their trust in the idea of a better life for every working man. Hence, the society-painted picture was a family with a hardworking man and a proper housewife in the center surrounded by industrial development and appliances with wealth as the ultimate goal and indicator of success measured between families by their properties and possessions.

The concept of a good and prosperous family was fundamental for the American society; nevertheless, the roots of this social pillar were in success and money, which created a strong base for selfishness and a hunt for properties and wealth. In the 50s, the standard and promoted family activity was watching TV, and "the 1950s was the first decade in which television had

¹⁹ Carlisle, *Handbook*, 22.

²⁰ Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 131, Apple Books.

²¹ Carlisle, *Handbook*, XI.

a major presence in society, and its impact proved enormous."²² Sitting in front of TV cut off communication and connection between people because the focus of most of their energy was towards the screen and information coming from it, and people around them were just other figures watching the same program - they were separated by the TV programs that absorbed their attention. This together but apart not focusing on each other only deepened the lack of communication within some U.S. families.²³

Overall, the fifties were filled with technological development in the household sphere, and the demand and desire for the newest models gave people some inspiration to focus on making money.²⁴ This wide range of new possibilities created motivation, and people were encouraged to work hard and live fully; nevertheless, these extended instances created confusion and pressure connected to the constructed idea of a good life for everybody. Lauren Berlant talks about the concept of *cruel optimism*, a slow process when people have some desires, but these dreams and lusts are the problems and obstacles on their roads towards its fulfillment.²⁵ Therefore, when the government in these two decades promoted houses for everybody or car to every household, people incorporated this into their minds as something normal, something that everybody should have. However, if somebody could actually reach this goal, he would not reach the desired happiness and satisfaction, but the greed for more.

This *cruel optimism* and circles of never-ending material goals and desires were connected to the fact that the working sphere underwent significant changes because during and then after the war, the U.S. industry expanded together with the overall economic power.

²² Schwartz, *An Eyewitness*, 16.

²³ Cinemas served as a similar form of escape - depicted in Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* when Tom Wingfield enjoys the secludes and privacy of the movies. Tom says: "People go to the *movies* instead of *moving*!" From Williams, *The Glass*, 55.

²⁴ Carlisle, *Handbook*, 32-4.

²⁵ Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 23.

Further, "the U.S. economy was not only intact but strengthened by the war: demand for industrial products and heavy government spending created new jobs and lifted the nation from the Great Depression."²⁶ Offers and demands were in a symbiotic relation, and the Americans wholly inhabited this new land of luxury and expansion. Nonetheless, Schwartz also highlights one additional and valuable thing that surrounded euphoric America:

At the same time, however, postwar politics in the new age of atomic weapons and superpower confrontations spawned a cold war that caused the United States to redefine its notions of national self-interest and contributed a profound sense of frustration to the spirit of the time.²⁷

Still, confusion and a new type of uncertainty with fear of another war affected people's lives from all social circles, and the postwar times were marked with changes and newness. The spread of capitalism affected the development of the decades, and the relationships between people were underlined with the question of how much do you own and what model of a car do you have. Its influence is seen especially in the three plays, where money and power profoundly upset the characters' lives. Berlant connects these problematic values created by capitalism with her definitions of *cruel optimism*. She claims that:

Under capitalism, money is power and if one has only surplus amounts of it, sovereignty is infinite and yet a weight that cannot be borne ... If consumption promises satisfaction in substitution and then denies it because all objects are rest stops amid the process of remaining unsatisfied that counts for being alive under capitalism, in the impasse of desire, then hoarding seems like a solution to something. Hoarding controls the promise of value against expenditure, as it performs the enjoyment of an infinite present of holding pure potential.²⁸

This craving and demand for more and something better fueled American society. People's consciousness was infected by this perception and understanding of success and happiness

²⁶ Schwartz, *An Eyewitness*, 3.

²⁷ Schwartz, *An Eyewitness*, 2.

²⁸ Berlant, *Cruel*, 42.

under the conditions of money and wealth. Thus, prejudice, jealousy, and stress might occur in the minds of capital-seeking Americans because all around them, the newest products were advertised.

1.3 The Role of the Mind

The pressure connected to the expectations of having a family, owning a house, getting a prosperous job were significantly determining factors of the 1940s and 1950s. Pressure rises with expectations, and Americans managed to exert tension onto themselves and others through family, work, or inside their consciousness. Slowly starting in the 1940s and fully exploding in the 1950s, the importance of a family was put on the top of national priorities. The idea of a perfect family was imprinted into the minds of Americans. The so-called TV families stood like a vision of traditional families,²⁹ and the 1950s was the ultimate profamily decade. It was presented as "the most basic institution in society," and everything was connected to it.³⁰ A situation of not having a prosperous and stable household was seen as a failure, and that forced mindset and standard caused tension inside already stressed minds. It is seen in research from the fifties when "less than 10 percent of Americans believed that an unmarried person could be happy."³¹

A psychological state in these two decades was connected to war scars, search for identity and place within the newly re-establishing plus modernized society, and trust or distrust within the family circle and society in general. To be seen and feel like a proper member of

²⁹ "A breadwinner father, a full-time homemaker mother, and dependent children," from Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, 122.

³⁰ Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, 122-123.

³¹ Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, 127.

society, there had to be a closely related group of people behind each individual. The family was understood as a substantial and essential part of a community and a base for society, and within this environment, children develop and learn how to behave and react in society. Therefore, families carry a crucial role in forming children's approach and openness towards others; moreover, the relationships within the family affect the children's responses in society.³²

A family is a group of people joined through something deeper like blood, history, emotions. These individuals come together and form something that can be either deep and real or shallow and fake. In general, society in the U.S. did not care about this; they just needed American homes that look good on the surface, to present a good image just like the one created for TV shows. Hence, no help connected to problems within the family members or even inside the individuals was mediated. The so-called perfect fifties suburbs houses were mainly just a myth in contrast to the reality of gender stereotypes and dysfunctionality transmitted from generation to generation.

Values, standards, responses, and many other things are passed within a family. Therefore, when a parent comes from a malfunctioning family where the social reactions and feelings were not adequately developed, it is then rather hard to create a functional and healthy family. Just like Thoburn and Sexton argue in their book, all individuals are parts of communities or groups; they are understood under some context, and through this lens, many deeper reasons and explanations connected to, for example, behavior can be found.³³ The authors explain the connectivity inside the family:

³² Erna Roostin, "Family Influence On The Development Of Children," *Journal of Elementary Education*, Vol 2, Number 1, (February 2018): 2, 5.

³³ John W. Thoburn and Thomas L. Sexton, *Family Psychology: Theory, Research, and Practise* (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2016), 4.

The relationships of couples and families are cocreated with a shared history, shared internalized perceptions and assumptions, a cocreated map of the world, a shared identity, shared sense of purpose, and strong, powerful, and durable reciprocal emotional attachments that last a lifetime (even beyond).³⁴

Members within the closest circle share, sometimes unconsciously, almost everything, and they affect each other constantly. The issue may occur when some member, especially a parent who takes care of the children's development and education, comes from a dysfunctional family without a good base; thus, they come without healthy, solid values and habits that could be shared within this new family. Therefore, the parent sends forward his flawed perceptions to the child. The imprinted standards, principles, or attitudes are often inside single person's mind, and individuals are formed within the closest circle even though the circle is more detrimental than beneficial for the development. In connection to this, Thoburn and Sexton describe:

that individuals are part of families, couples, and extended family systems that span generations as well as broader communities and cultures. The idea is that individuals are nested within family systems, and families are nested within broader social and cultural systems, which include the extended family, parents' work organizations, children's schools, children's peer groups, involved helping professionals, the wider community, the family's ethnic group, the prevailing culture, and the family's religious or spiritual community.³⁵

This is all interconnected, and together the families form the nation or communities; when one connection is problematic, adverse outcomes spread, and without conscious effort, the circle of dysfunctionality can never be broken.

Focusing mainly on the flawless-looking surface of the American families only deepened the dysfunctionality inside that might cause disruption and problems in society. As a response to that damaging trend, many dramas from the 1940s and mainly 1950s "point to problems of lovelessness, emotional repression, individual isolation, and stifled communication within the

³⁴ Thoburn and Sexton, *Family Psychology*, 51.

³⁵ Thoburn and Sexton, *Family Psychology*, 52.

American family."³⁶ Some playwrights uncovered the problematic inwards of families; they exposed the ugly truth, wreckage, and its causes.

The faultless TV families set the vision of perfectness and the values of rebuilding something and being a great nation associated with the postwar era, and people directed their goals to that. This can be related to Berlant's *cruel optimism*. When she talks about the mindset of *cruel optimism*, her ideas and definitions can be connected to capitalism; she claims that *cruel optimism* can be delineated as a condition when somebody attaches himself to a relatively problematic aim or vision.³⁷ This can be connected to the style of life in the 1940s and 1950s. People in America have been under the influence of new technologies plus the American Dream, which has been there since the beginnings of this nation, and this *cruel optimism* is another branch coming out from exaggerated standards, values, and understanding of one's life. An illustration of the *cruel optimism* is when people want to become the constructed characters from the model families and fulfill the American Dream connected to material prosperity and success in the work field.

³⁶ Schwartz, *An Eyewitness*, 91.

³⁷ Berlant, *Cruel*, 24.

2. The American Dream

The land was ours before we were the land's.
She was our land more than a hundred years
Before we were her people. She was ours
In Massachusetts, in Virginia,
But we were England's, still colonials,
Possessing what we still were unpossessed by,
Possessed by what we now no more possessed.
we were withholding made us weak
Until we found out that it was ourselves
We were withholding from our land of living,
And forthwith found salvation in surrender.
Such as we were we gave ourselves outright
(The deed of gift was many deeds of war)
To the land vaguely realizing westward,
But still unstoried, artless, unenhanced,
Such as she was, such as she would become.³⁸

In *The Gift Outright*, Robert Frost expresses the problematic relation between people and a land that has been rooted in the American history since the arrival of the first settlers. By this, Frost suggests and depicts one of the main bases of the American Dream's core ideas; therefore, the poem serves as a suitable introduction to the historical development of this Dream.

2.1 Inception and Evolution

³⁸ Robert Frost, *The Collected Poems of Robert Frost*, ed. Edward Connery Lathem (London: Vintage Books, 2013), 348.

Frost's poem is analyzed in *Bloom's Literary Themes* dedicated to the American Dream. There, he focuses on not only this poem but also other major literary works with traces of the development of some fundamental ideas incorporated in the American Dream. He writes that this poem:

explores the American Dream in terms of the promise of ownership of land. The poem presents two particular problems for contemporary readers. First, the matter of the first-person plural pronoun and whom it represents—the "we" to whom the continent is promised; and second, the vocabulary of possession—the multiple forms of the words possess, give, and gift—and the larger issue of owning and belonging that these words indicate. The earliest promises of America were based on the idea of fresh opportunity—to escape from the oppression of history to a virgin land where one could make oneself anew. By the time the term "American Dream" was actually coined (by James Truslow Adams in 1931), it had come to mean prosperity and possession of land. After World War II, the American Dream became more specifically identified as the citizen's possession of a free-standing home. Thus the postwar move to the suburbs is central to the definition we retain today of this term, even where it is used cynically.³⁹

The American Dream started with the desire for a new land of freedom, and it developed into homeownership - the vision of some form of a private piece of land and freedom to inhabit it persisted. The longing for freedom was associated with home, and the idea of home is exceedingly complex that it can mean country, building, or family, but it often symbolizes some safe and free space. Hence, personal freedom and some given right to possess a land without any major restrictions have been part of the process of the ongoing desire for the American Dream even when this term did not have a name yet.

In Jim Cullen's book dedicated to the construction of the American Dream, the author divides the chapters according to the significant historical changes in understanding of the

³⁹ Harold Bloom, *Bloom's Literary Themes: The American Dream* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2009), 59.

Dream. The first traces of it lay within the Puritans and their desire for religious freedom of expression on some new and free land.⁴⁰ From these roots, it can be connected with Míguez's references that the Dream came from universal immigrant's desires and hopefulness attached to individual and social prosperity and freedom.⁴¹ Individuals or groups, or simply people with a dream of a better life, searched for some free land or freedom in general. In their visions, they formed the foundation of the desirable concept of what is now called the American Dream. Nevertheless, the generality within this concept of freedom in the free world for all makes this socially constructed image rather vague, problematic, and unreachable.⁴²

The problem of this dreamy illusion is put forward in the poem when Frost expresses the idea that the American Dream is indeed just a dream, therefore, something reachable mostly only unconsciously or in the imagination. Relating to this, Cullen talks about the ambiguity and uncertainty connected to this idea, mainly because it is a process of dreaming that carries these mystical powers within itself;⁴³ thus, it has to bear the uncertainty of whether it can actually come true.

The basic idea of the Dream is linked to the human ability to dream about something bigger and better. Wanting more from life might be the one thing that connects all the previous and also current generations of people inhabiting the American continent and dreaming of a better future for themselves. Cullen comments on the universality of this type of fantasy and the roots of the American Dream when he claims that:

⁴⁰ For more details, see Jim Cullen, *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea That Shaped a Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 8.

⁴¹ Ricardo Míguez, "The American Dreams: A Brief Historical Outline," in *American Dreams : Dialogues in U.S. Studies*, ed. Míguez, Ricardo, and Universidade Veiga de Almeida (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 2, 27.

⁴² For example, every Dream searcher faces various obstacles due to the different times and conditions - the experience is not universal.

⁴³ Cullen, *The American*, 7.

the Pilgrims may not have actually talked about the American Dream, but they would have understood the idea: after all, they lived it as people who imagined a destiny for themselves. So did the Founding Fathers. So did illiterate immigrants who could not speak English but intuitively expressed rhythms of the Dream with their hands and their hearts.⁴⁴

The relocation, hard work, or a simple determination to escape, for example, religious or political restrictions created a foundation for the official term, and it was all connected to the desire of becoming an independent freeholder, which is an image that settled deep down within the core of the American identity.⁴⁵

Through this initial and pure-looking desire for freedom, some feeling of entitlement to freeholding and the idea of a better life for everybody embedded itself to the American Dream's designs and visions. Dream searchers got themselves unwillingly dragged into the socially constructed concepts. The destructiveness of the hunt for money and success has been evident since the inception of the idea of the American Dream; it has been planted in the heads of people on the American continent for a very long time. Colonizers coming to the new land very often died due to the harsh and unfamiliar conditions,⁴⁶ people coming to big cities sometimes lost everything during the process of finding a new job in a tough industrial environment; simply put, there have been examples of the fallen almost-achievers of the American Dream since the beginning. However, the hope was preserved, and people who managed to climb to the top served as solid examples and role models, and they overshadowed the failed ones.⁴⁷ In the human world, success screams louder than failure, and the idea of something better and independently owned ties human minds to optimistic fantasies, which may lead towards (self)destruction. Hence, the quest for the American Dream may detach people from reality,

⁴⁴ Cullen, *The American*, 5.

⁴⁵ Cullen, *The American*, 142.

⁴⁶ For example, weather, countryside.

⁴⁷ Cullen, *The American*, 7.

creating a paradox because they cannot even enjoy their lives due to constant dissatisfaction or fear. In connection to this, Lauren Berlant asks this question:

Why do people stay attached to conventional good-life fantasies—say, of enduring reciprocity in couples, families, political systems, institutions, markets, and at work—when the evidence of their instability, fragility, and dear cost abounds? Fantasy is the means by which people hoard idealizing theories and tableaux about how they and the world "add up to something."⁴⁸

Achieving or failing, trying or giving up, overall, the American Dream gives the possibility of a choice; a promise of opportunity that arises from the original concept connected to understanding one's potentialities to work harder and dedication towards some goal. Understanding it like this, the only obstacle for the triumphant fulfillment would be the Dream pursuer him/herself; hence, it implies that everybody can do it if he/she tries hard enough. This is a notion attached to the upward mobility that has been part of the Dream from the beginning as well - Puritans, the outlaws searching for religious freedom, or the Founding Fathers, the fighters for Independence; in short, people trying to change their position within the current world, society, or system. Cullen defines this social climbing as well when he states that:

The foundation of this dream, upward mobility, was a belief that one could realize the fruits of one's aspirations through applied intelligence and effort. This was the dream of Abraham Lincoln and his heirs. A similar emphasis on applied intelligence and effort also animated the Dream of Home Ownership, which typically required investments of many kinds - money, time, labor, among others - in order to yield a domestic dividend.⁴⁹

Therefore, the person going after the dream has to know his own limitations and options formed by social settings and highlighted by the basic desire for a better life. Moreover, according to Pettit and his take on the theory of freedom, people cannot be free unless they are not holding

⁴⁸ Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 2.

⁴⁹ Cullen, *The American*, 159-160.

each other responsible for their mutual well-being - to be free means to be fully ready to deserve either blame or praise and hold the responsibility for both of these two.⁵⁰ The issue with this is that the later constructed image of the American Dream does not talk about the possible bad outcomes, obstacles, or failures, and it does not encourage responsibility for human actions; it instead evokes some selfishness and entitlement to a good life in the form of material possessions and wealth in general.

These wrongful visions of wealth plant a seed of dysfunctionality within people, and this never-ending race for more creates only detachment from reality. The designed illusion of the Dream hangs above the characters in the three dramas of this thesis and places them outside the real world, blinds and detaches them from the reality and actual human beings living next to them. Furthermore, as a result, there is no harmony among the family members, society, or individuals, as most of them live in their fantasy lands. Frost, in the last two lines of the poem,⁵¹ implies that the rootlessness and cultureless atmospheres have influenced Americans since the times of the first settlers, and because of this disharmony between the land and the people, the American Dream can always stay only a dream in someone's imagination.⁵² And this disconnection between one's imagination and reality may cause discord projected into the daily lives of Williams' and Miller's characters and produces the overall struggle within their families.

2.2 The Dream in the 1940s and 50s

⁵⁰ Philip Pettit, *A Theory of Freedom: From the Psychology to the Politics of Agency* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2001), 12.

⁵¹ "But still unstoried, artless, unenhanced, Such as she was, such as she would be." Frost, *The Collected*, 348.

⁵² Bloom, *Bloom's Literary*, 64-65.

As was mentioned above several times, the forties and fifties in the United States were the postwar times; times filled with changes in, for example, society structure and industrial development, within the work sphere, in relationships between people, and living conditions in forms of suburbs. The forties were reunion and rebuilding times, and the fifties were filled with innovations in, for example, the work field and materialistic goods. The American Dream was embedded in these two periods and was somehow visible in all these spheres, developments, and changes throughout aspirations and desire for life improvements.

In this chapter, the American Dream will be examined through three significant aspects that affected life in the USA in the forties and fifties and influenced Americans and their visions of a good life. This thesis will study the corrupted American Dream through the fabricated idea of a perfect family, escaping reality through daydreaming, and the problem of money as a tormenting organizer of life. These three parts are also related to the separation between individuals, repression, high hopes, the clash between past and present, or the belief in a good life for everybody. All of that is related to the wrong and constructed idea of the American Dream that took control over characters in Williams' and Miller's dramas and created dysfunctionality within families in the plays.

2.2.1 The Spotless Family

In the first chapter through Thoburn and Sexton's book, the understanding of family as a social network within people who are interconnected not only through blood or feelings but

also through their role in society and its creations was introduced.⁵³ Adding a definition of the family to this argument of theirs, Thoburn and Sexton claim that the family is:

defined as a group of individuals who live together with shared beliefs, purposes, and emotional attachments. These relational groups are more than a collection of individuals who share space and time. The family is a social system, which supports the survival and welfare of its members.⁵⁴

The concept is that society and family are interwoven, and one's success is related to the other well-being. In the ideal world, family and society cooperate and complete each other so the state and families can thrive because of the built-in stability. Hence it is somewhat logical that the US wanted to have solid families for society to prosper. To accomplish that, a concept of the perfect family was introduced all over America on billboards, posters, and TVs. In this way, everyone could consciously and unconsciously absorb the created picture of the desirable family standards and harmonious households with happy relatives. In the forties and mainly in the fifties, to have a perfect household was part of the American Dream; it completed the vision of the Dream.

The 1940s was the decade of rebuilding what was lost in the war times. Family members were searching for each other or for the things they had before the war, and human connections shattered by war separation were tried to be renewed. In the 1950s, the stress and depression connected to war persisted, but also the myth of the traditional family started in this decade.⁵⁵ There were the perfect TV families as an inspiration; a vision of life in the suburbs in perfect coexistence with the surroundings and neighbors were the things that people attached their

⁵³ Chapter 1. *The 1940s and 1950s USA*, "1.3. The Role of the Mind," 21.

⁵⁴ John W. Thoburn and Thomas L. Sexton, *Family Psychology: Theory, Research, and Practise* (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2016), 51.

⁵⁵ Steven Mintz, "Introduction: Does the American Family Have a History? Family Images and Realities," *OAH Magazine of History* 15, no. 4 (2001): 9, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25163456>.

minds to as a road to their happiness. What was happening was "the democratization of the family ideal ... a reaction against the hardships of the depression and the upheavals of World War II; the affordability of single-family track homes in the booming suburbs; and rapidly rising real incomes."⁵⁶ It all may seem flawless, and for some people, it might have been like that, but Williams and Miller depict the other side of this; the one that got dragged into some constructed, unrealistic image of the traditional American family, and many things got destroyed throughout the process of chasing this vision.

Having a spotless family was not only part of the American Dream and its seekers, but it also stood in the middle of American society. It was a form of propaganda that has been connected to America's tendency to romanticizing its past. One of the most potent myths deeply rooted in society is that, throughout history, American families were spotless. This constructed idealistic household partly originated in the beautified and out-of-reality image of a money-providing husband, caring housewife, and well-behaved children living in harmony under one roof. This myth demonstrates that the image of some ideal family has been incorporated into the minds of Americans for some time and its evidence is in the stories shared by writers or historians talking about harmonious households within the American continent fighting the misfortune and obstacles. Connected to this is romanticizing of the past. A process that does not consider any bad aspects but only the pure ones and blames the present times for occurring problems and issues like divorce or violence.⁵⁷ As a result, the past or the fantasies were usually better than the reality, and people who were living under these influences were trying to copy the good old times or live up to the expectations set by TV, thus putting pressure and high expectations onto themselves.

⁵⁶ Mintz, "Introduction," 10.

⁵⁷ Mintz, "Introduction," 5.

Connecting it again with Lauren Berlant's concept of *cruel optimism*, this imprinted fantasy of perfect household was paradoxical due to a double bind, which, according to Berlant, is a state when a person tights him/herself to some particular fantasy and its fulfillment he/she connects to reaching optimism and satisfaction. The author points out that "optimism is cruel when it takes shape as an affectively stunning double bind: a binding to fantasies that block the satisfactions they offer, and a binding to the promise or vision as such that the fantasies have come to represent."⁵⁸ It is an attachment to some objects that should sustain the individual in life, but there are flawed relationships with and towards them. Because in people's heads, having or achieving that is what would make them happy, but without it, there is only misery; people attach themselves to something that is both motivation but also their doom. Overall, the objects of one's fantasies are not the issue; the problem is the relation and understanding of them.

Through this defective fantasizing, people lived in and attached themselves to a world of illusions because the fantasies were "alive" there. They dreamt about the scenarios and things that, according to them, could bring them good relationships or perfect members of the family, and instead of focusing on what they had or could realistically have, they only dreamt and searched for perfection that in the real world could not stand. Because of that, they got lost in their visions and started to compare everything and everyone to the spotless creations. Some people compared their families to the standards from the past or suggestions of modern American households created by society and were trying to incorporate that into their home. They kept distancing themselves from reality through these farfetched fantasies, thus from the genuine and realistic possibility for happiness.

⁵⁸ Berlant, *Cruel*, 51.

It is noteworthy to say that some people could reach their version of the Dream; but the cost was tremendous. The issues were inside the corrupted idea of the American Dream, and even its fulfillment did not mean happiness, victory, or fame. One of the examples of this is presented by Coontz when he reasons that:

A successful 1950s family, moreover, was often achieved at enormous cost to the wife, who was expected to subordinate her own needs and aspirations to those of both her husband and her children. In consequence, no sooner was the ideal of the postwar family accepted than observers began to comment perplexedly on how discontented women seemed in the very roles they supposedly desired most ... Some women took this resentment out on their families.⁵⁹

A picture-perfect family with picture-perfect members but deeply rotten on the inside because of the crushing power of the desired vision of a perfect family living in a perfect world. Grudge, remorse, lies, and zero or shallow communication were the real things inside some households. Thus, the American spotless suburban family was a polished myth covering the real issues within individuals and society. On the outside, the amicable and protecting home was there, but for some children, "growing up in 1950s families was not so much a matter of being protected from the harsh realities of the outside world as preventing the outside world from learning the harsh realities of family life."⁶⁰ Many people lived in pretense and fake perfectness and profoundly suffered in it. Hence, some form of escape was needed, and many individuals started to create and imagine places where life was more manageable, money was secure, or no pain was presented. And for some of them, it was the only possible way how to cope with the bogus reality or pressure of perfectness - they wrapped themselves in even more fakeness and separated from the present and mentally placed themselves into their private fantasy land or dreams of a good life.

⁵⁹ Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 150, Apple Books.

⁶⁰ Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, 146.

2.2.2 Defensive Daydreaming in Fantasy Lands

Imagination, dreaming, and fantasy are concepts that, at first glance, do not imply something sinister or wrong. For some people, envisioning the future or imagining hypothetical situations brings many advantages, like preparing for some scenarios, planning, or calming down. However, for others, this alternative reality may become an addiction when one cannot face reality and function within the mundane world and people. These individuals hide in their minds where every image is idealized, and everything goes smoothly. They are in a state of pleasure similar to drugs or feel some pleasant emotions of satisfaction.⁶¹

This form of escape can mean daydreaming about an entirely different world but also about the past or living in toxic nostalgia. The danger is "when daydreaming turns addictive and compulsive, it can overwhelm normal functioning, impeding relationships and work;"⁶² when it consumes one's mind and suppresses reality.

Considering the situation and legacy of the postwar period mentioned in the first chapter, daydreaming might have been a coping mechanism, a form of toxic nostalgia, or fierce clinging towards some improvement. All of these three possibilities are connected to the fact that the current living conditions of daydreaming individuals were unbearable due to some trauma, loneliness, guilt, or misunderstanding, which is depicted through Miller's and Williams' characters.

⁶¹ Josie Glausiusz, "Living in an Imaginary World," *Scientific American*, uploaded January 1, 2014, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/living-in-an-imaginary-world/>.

⁶² Glausiusz, "Living."

People living in the fantasy worlds might have been dreaming about various things from a dream job to recognition in society that, in the forties and fifties, were linked to the American Dream. The purpose of these dreams was frequently connected to the idea of wealth and success. Americans were dreaming of life in the newly built suburbs with the perfect family, dreaming of owning fancy car or elegant clothes, dreaming of anything that would show the world their proper position within society.

All of these are parts of the American Dream because they symbolize hope and wealth within the U.S. culture and visions of achieving something greater. Imagination may be a source of excellent ideas, great sources of motivation, or a device to escape some harsh moments, but living only in fantasies or imagining how much someone wants to be happy and thinking that the only way to happiness is through wealth and success, separate people from the real world.

Life went around success and money, and just as Brenda Boudreau implies, there were:

generic, stereotypic definitions: a house in the suburbs, with a white picket fence, two kids, a job they love and plenty of money to have two or more "nice" cars and to take several vacations a year. It's a promise for the future that they all assume they will have access to, a promise for the future that they assume everyone can have access to if they are willing to work hard.⁶³

Work hard to be rewarded, the mantra of the American Dream that filled USA inhabitants' minds was based on the visible indicators of success or wealth. Without proof, people could not officially be the Dream achievers; therefore, the capital and possession were determiners of the Dream. The pressure of the open possibility of a good life for everybody wrecked the lives in Miller's and Williams' plays analyzed in this thesis.

⁶³ Brenda Boudreau, "Understanding The Myth Of The American Dream Through The Personal Narrative," in *American Dreams: Dialogues in U.S. Studies*, ed. Miguez, Ricardo, and Universidade Veiga de Almeida (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 34.

2.2.3 Money as a Bitter Bellwether

Just as Lana Del Rey sings in her song *National Anthem*, "Money is the anthem of success ... Money is the reason we exist, everybody knows it, it's a fact"⁶⁴ the value and importance of money have been known to humans for centuries. In the past, it got them food for peasantry and extravagance for royalty, later on, it helped to distinguish social status, and nowadays, it allows comfortable life with almost no boundaries.⁶⁵ Money cannot buy you happiness is a well-known quote, but people who do not have the money usually do not believe it and still connect wealth with joy, and people who have assets sometimes get lost within the circulation of coins and capital.

Individuals with economic problems are very often filled with fear, insecurity and are in a state of despair. For them, securing some wealth means being finally happy and calm. Housel defines this link between money and happiness:

People want to become wealthier to make them happier. Happiness is a complicated subject because everyone's different. But if there's a common denominator in happiness—a universal fuel of joy—it's that people want to control their lives. The ability to do what you want, when you want, with who you want, for as long as you want, is priceless. It is the highest dividend money pays.⁶⁶

In such a manner, it is not so much about money but about the capability to live a free life, and money might be just a tool towards freedom. This goes back to the prime motivation behind the first settlers' Dream, the Dream of religious liberty and freedom of choice.

⁶⁴ Lana Del Rey, "National Anthem," track 6 on *Born To Die*, Universal Music Corp., Hookline & Singer Music Uk, Hookline & Singer Music, Notting Dale Songs Inc. 2012. <https://www.musixmatch.com/lyrics/Lana-Del-Rey/National-Anthem>.

⁶⁵ S. E. G. Lea, & P. Webley, "Money as tool, money as drug: The biological psychology of a strong incentive," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 29(02). (2006): 161-162. doi:10.1017/s0140525x06009046.

⁶⁶ Morgan Housel, *The Psychology of Money: Timeless Lessons of Wealth, Greed, and Happiness* (Petersfield: Harriman House, 2020), 161, Apple Books.

As mentioned in the first chapter, stories about successful men are a substantial part of the Dream; they serve as an inspiration, motivation, and as a manual; as something that is supposed to guarantee that the good life for everybody is actually possible. The idea of wealth and financial success is attached to the visible marks of luxury like cars or houses but also to the stories of famous businessmen or self-made heroes who, through their hard work, reached the wealth and glory of the American Dream. Housel suggests that the stories and tales serve as one of the most powerful motivations:

When we think about the growth of economies, businesses, investments and careers, we tend to think about tangible things—how much stuff do we have and what are we capable of? But stories are, by far, the most powerful force in the economy. They are the fuel that can let the tangible parts of the economy work, or the brake that holds our capabilities back.⁶⁷

Hearing or even seeing somebody who looks wealthy and mighty on the surface may work either as a strong motivation or discouragement. In both cases, the effect is somewhat negative and psychologically demanding due to either *cruel optimism* or profound self-doubts.

As Housel points out in his book, in general, humans want to be praised by others, and they aim to gain respect through the act of buying and then showing material things, very often luxurious. Also, people tend to evaluate others through wealth and visible possessions - financial success is measured by cars, homes, or other belongings.⁶⁸

There is still a paradox that being wealthy, or poor does not fully determine whether somebody is truly happy or have the picture-perfect family. In her book, Coontz claims that "the problems of working-class families did not lie in their economic situation but in their failure to create harmonious gender roles." In all three plays analyzed in this thesis, money is

⁶⁷ Housel, *The Psychology*, 354.

⁶⁸ Housel, *The Psychology*, 180, 185.

in the middle of the problems but the gender roles and the overall difficulty to create a harmonious relationship within the family members are the creators of instability and malfunctions. Economic instability and issues connected to income or work, in general, created fragile grounds for households, thus securing some constant cash that brings all the material positions was a vast requirement of the Dream. Miller's and Williams' characters are trying to fix the problematic relationships and lack of connection with money, which only created more issues in a form of depression, corruption, or deceive. Hence, family problems, maladaptive daydreaming, and desire for wealth are all interconnected and one issue feeds the other two which leads to even broader and deeper dysfunctionality.

In the forties and fifties, reminders of the American Dream were to be found in many aspects of everyday life; nostalgia and its glorified past, TV broadcasting perfect families, or for example, luxurious belongings of people moving within society. These visuals, stories, or learned standards are the major movers of the American Dream in the three plays of this thesis, and the further analysis will focus on them and their effect on the characters within Williams' and Miller's families.

3. The Spotless Family

The rose is a rose,
And was always a rose.
But the theory now goes
That the apple's a rose,
And the pear is, and so's
The plum, I suppose.
The dear only know
What will next prove a rose.
You, of course, are a rose—
But were always a rose.⁶⁹

Frost's poem *The Rose Family* depicts the problem of shallowness, judgment, and expectations. The visuals and what people or society see are just flat perceptions of something with much deeper roots. These roots go back into the past, and with these foundations, there is the struggle to stand and function in the present.

This chapter will depict families presented by Miller and Williams, families that may look a certain way on the surface and are judged according to some set standards, but they hide significant issues within themselves. As given on the previous pages,⁷⁰ having a perfect household was one of the priorities. Thus, the pressure was there; the demand for this standard was in people's unconsciousness, yet several aspects occurring daily were blocking the entire fulfillment of this vision.

A clash between past and present, separation, and repression are all presented in Miller's and Williams' three plays and significantly affect the overall development of plots and characters - creating dysfunctionality within the families, dysfunctionality that cripples not only

⁶⁹ Robert Frost, *The Collected Poems of Robert Frost*, ed. Edward Connery Lathem (London: Vintage Books, 2013), 246.

⁷⁰ Chapter 1. *The 1940s and 1950s USA*, "The Role of the Mind," 19.

the personal sphere but also the social responses and behavior of the characters and wrangles with the perceived concept of the perfect American family.

Ideas from Thoburn's and Sexton's book about family psychology were introduced in the previous chapters.⁷¹ Connecting the preceding arguments, the following paragraph partially explains the doom of the families examined in this thesis:

For families, it is essential to have stability and consistency. This is what gives family shared meaning and a collective identity. The stability in a family system comes from the recursive behavior patterns that involve relatively stable rules, roles, routines, rituals, and mechanisms. At the same time, it is essential that families have the capacity to evolve over the course of the life cycle and meet changing demands necessary for healthy development, adaptation, and survival.⁷²

The first statement would be enough to explain the doom and sorrow within the Wingfield, Keller, and Loman families because stability and consistency are something that does not exist in the plays due to the everchanging and demanding concept of the American Dream that affects Amanda and Tom Wingfield and all the male characters from Keller and Loman clans. Its weight is placed upon the rest of the individuals living and being around them. As a result, these three households created by Miller and Williams are ill-fated because, as Daniel Goleman highlights:

The self is built up slowly, from childhood on ... Its origins are in the interactions between parent and infant; its development runs among lines carved by the contours of relationships with parents, family, peers ... The self-system sculps the way a person filters and interprets experience.⁷³

⁷¹ Chapter 1. *The 1940s and 1950s USA*, "1.3. The Role of the Mind," 21.

⁷² John W. Thoburn and Thomas L. Sexton, *Family Psychology: Theory, Research, and Practise* (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2016), 31.

⁷³ Daniel Goleman, *Vital Lies, Simple Truth: The Psychology of Self-deception* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1998), 96.

In these three families, individualism, secreted, and damaging expectations are the controlling aspects, and these rather negative features are the ones that the children absorbed during their development; thus, some improvement simply cannot be expected, and these families are caught in the vicious circle of dysfunctionality. Also, Goleman uses Mardi Horowitz's⁷⁴ list of forms of denial. According to this list, characters will be analyzed through specific types of denial. As it will be shown in this thesis, in none of the three plays, living under the same roof or sharing name or blood means a harmonious and happy relationship or genuine support.

3.1 The Glass Menagerie

Expectations are interwoven with Williams' "memory play."⁷⁵ This piece has influential autobiographical elements and tells a story about a family of three completely different people. It is about the development of tragic relationships told by the male character Tom and it "is autobiographical to the extent that it out-lines a cultural phenomenon formative of Williams's own outlook: personal and national memories of a genteel but decadent southern past overcome by the heedless aggression of the industrial North."⁷⁶ This influence of the past moves with the plot and is a foundation for the rejection developed in each character.

Amanda, Laura, and Tom form a trio that accompanies each other on their lonely journey towards uncertainty in the future, but this fragile formation is broken off by Tom, who,

⁷⁴ Goleman, *Vital Lies*, applies his ideas on a list from Mardi Horowitz, "Psychological Response to Serious Life Events," in *The Denial of Stress*. ed. Shlomo Breznitz (New York: International University Press, 1983).

⁷⁵ A term used by Williams in the Production notes: Tennessee Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*. London, Penguin Books, 2009), xvi.

Also, "Everything in the play happens in and from memory. Insight and perspective are counterpoised by that peculiar trick of memory that diminishes some things and enlarges others, according to their importance. Such distortion always serves to sharpen and explain. Likewise, Tom's account, always slightly unreal, always slightly over the top, veers between caricature and canonization." From Greta Heintzelman, Alycia Smith-Howard, *Critical Companion to Tennessee Williams* (New York: Facts On File, 2005), 91.

⁷⁶ Jacqueline Foertsch, *American Culture in the 1940s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 109.

after many years, loses his patience with his mother's demands based on memories from her utterly different lifetime. Still, his escape is not complete because his mind and thoughts will always be there with the two women whose influence settled deep down within him.

Overall, "the impossibility of escape and the trap of memory—or of the past in general,"⁷⁷ are two major themes in this play, and some regret or nostalgia always surround all three members of the Wingfield family. All of that is presented through Tom's memories - his confessions and understanding of certain encounters between the members so Williams offers only one point of view, one re-telling of the family's past.

Tom's perspectives collected in his memory combines with Amanda's past time stories create a double nostalgia. With that, Williams presents a play where nothing seems to be merry and bright, because it is all immersed in the foggy memory pit.

This unclearness and despair are created not only by the rejection of reality but also by the separation and overall disconnection within the family members. As a response, all three characters created a wall of pretense around themselves to protect their consciousness from the devastating and unbearable present. According to the definition mentioned at the beginning of this chapter (for the purposes of this chapter, it will be called the *Horowitz list*), Amanda fits into the type of denial done by constricted thought, which means "the failure to explore likely avenues of meaning other than the obvious one at hand; an abbreviated range of flexibility."⁷⁸ Amanda shelters herself within nostalgia and memories from her childhood and the apparent conditions of her antisocial children; nothing else is visible for her. Through that, she sets a dismal tone in the household because she is not able to stop using the Old South standards as examples of the correct way of life (in her eyes), and she places far-fetched expectations upon

⁷⁷ Greta Heintzelman, Alycia Smith-Howard, *Critical Companion to Tennessee Williams* (New York: Facts On File, 2005), 90.

⁷⁸ Goleman, *Vital Lies*, 52-53.

her two offspring. Through nostalgia, she wants to return to the good old days and that former style of life.

The reason behind these almost attacking nostalgia traps all over their apartment is her lack of flexibility and open-mindedness, knowledge of the cruelty of the present times, and the battles that, especially her daughter, has and will have to face. Laura and her disability bring fear into Amanda's heart. She knows how hard it will be for Laura in the world of Depression,⁷⁹ and, overall, there are the struggles connected to wealth, work, and war conflicts. Both females have to face the unfairness of the world, and their steps in society are predetermined by set norms and labels connected to females and their roles and positions. However, both women struggle alone and choose a completely different approach and fighting style that ultimately divides them.

Amanda's aggressive methods result in the complete separation of the remaining members of her family. Her approach may be radical and too invasive, but she is still the only one trying to actively fight the atrocious and challenging living situation. The overall problem with this behavior is that, on the surface, she has become obsessed and turned into a controlling bully⁸⁰ who desperately wants happiness. This style of hers is rather invasive. She does not respect her children's privacy and their opinions, so their response towards this is distancing and rejecting Amanda and her pressure. As a result, she is standing alone in the middle of the noncooperating madness that is supposed to be her family.

Consciously or not, Amanda has been creating unbearable tension that has transformed her children into apathetic people who either respond with resistance (Tom and their arguments and differences) or do not react (Laura and the indifference to everything around her). Amanda

⁷⁹ Michael Paller, *Gentlemen Callers, Tennessee Williams, Homosexuality, and Mid-Twentieth-Century Broadway Drama* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 35-36.

⁸⁰ "Amanda: I'm sick, too - of your nonsense! Why can't you and your brother be normal people? Fantastic whims and behavior!" From Williams, *The Glass*, 51.

sees the frightfully looking future, and she is scared because she realizes the danger awaiting them. Her responses are the aggressiveness behind her actions and hyperactivity, which contrast with the demeanor of her children, who do not seem to care about the future of this family as a group.

Tom leaves them to follow his own path, and Laura, with her frights, cannot help with some life improvement. Still, Paller summarizes Laura as a fighter as well; he argues that:

Laura, too, possesses a well of determination too often overlooked. She has built around herself a world so secure that it withstands all the efforts of her mother to draw her out. There is nothing faded, gray, or ambivalent about the willpower it takes to rebuff Amanda Wingfield so successfully for so many years. The one trait that the Wingfields have in common is the will to struggle and survive in a hostile world.⁸¹

Whether they are fighters or not is answered through the resistance that they possess in their everyday encounters with daily struggles. The problem is that none of them is a team player, so they fight alone, sometimes even with each other, and the hostile world keeps crushing them. Instead of cooperating, communicating, and battling together, they depart from one another and hide inside their minds.

They do not trust each other on a deeper level. Sztompka presents three types of commitment in trusting, the third one being the most intimate and profound, usually occurring in close relationships.⁸² This family got stuck on the first level when they only trust that the other individuals will do what they regularly do, the routine daily things. In this home, there is no substantial commitment because these are evolved from deeper connections formed in relationships based on mutual trust. Their distrust means stagnation in the awful living situation as a thoroughly dysfunctional family with shallowness and loneliness.

⁸¹ Paller, *Gentlemen*, 36.

⁸² The first one is "anticipatory trust," the second is "responsive trust." More information in Piotr Sztompka, *Trust: A Sociological Theory* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 27.

As a response to their separation, all three Wingfields are hidden in their heads where they created worlds outside reality that help them cope with the lonely life and the misunderstanding of the other family members. They live their lives under the same roof but together, they share only accusations and judgment.⁸³

The Dream tells Amanda to secure her family in the old-fashioned (in her eyes correct) ways. As a result of her dreamish values from the past, Tom, after many years of bitterness, becomes a rejection itself and, in the end, he follows his individual desires, just like his father. Laura is simply too overwhelmed by all the hardship around her that she is deaf towards everything except the silent glass collection and old records - she separates herself from the world of humans.⁸⁴

This family's problems creating their dysfunctionality begin with the lack of flexibility, communication, and cooperation. They rise from beds every day, but they do not shine⁸⁵ - they do not fully live or enjoy life because the conditions, atmosphere, and their stubbornness do not let them.

3.2 All My Sons

The Keller family inhabits a space in-between past and present and part of the dysfunctionality in this household is affected by their inability to cope with reality and

⁸³ "Tom: I give up all that I dream of doing and being ever!" From Williams, *The Glass*, 21.

⁸⁴ Just like Williams states in The Characters before the beginning of the script where he writes that Laura is influenced by her physical state: "A childhood illness has left her crippled ... and held her in brace ... Stemming from this, Laura's separation increases till she is like a piece of her own glass collection, too exquisitely fragile to move from the shelf." From "The Characters," in Williams, *The Glass*.

⁸⁵ Tom: "I'll rise - but I won't shine." From Williams, *The Glass*, 25.

acknowledge mistakes in the past. Instead, Joe and Kate suppress all the painful outcomes⁸⁶ of Joe's selfish choice to send out the damaged engine heads. In the Introduction of *All My Sons*, Miller depicts the obstacle of time when he writes that:

There is no past that can be confronted with total honesty and no future that does not carry a threat as well as a promise; and the present is no more than a temporary condition ... The living are haunted by the dead, whom they seek to exorcise with a simple denial of reality ... It is about a man's failure to understand the terms of the social contract.⁸⁷

The Keller family is haunted by one major secret, a secret that hurt people in the past, haunts people in the present, and will determine the future of the survivors of this burden from the wartimes.

On the surface, Kellers are a perfect-looking family that, in the eyes of society, managed to overcome a tragic loss, rebuilt their business after a terrible choice that killed soldiers, and no matter what, keep staying on top of their community, keep smiling and actively participating in multiple events - all that they do or present as a family.

Nonetheless, underneath this surface perfection, Miller shows characters who drown themselves in repression and loneliness mixed with fear or confusion. This family is the perfect-looking group but just from a distance. The postwar times and mistakes made during the previous war period damaged them, and the real fragility is hidden underneath all the impeccable relationships. Their camouflage of the lies can be taken down easily with the right questions and uncover the real, weak, and rotten cores filled with the painful truth. On the inside, there is only fear of veracity, and this anxiety creates an overall distrust that weakens this family and makes their life and social position within the community unstable and shallow.

⁸⁶ For example, the death of their son and wrongful imprisonment of their friend.

⁸⁷ Arthur Miller, *All My Sons* (London: Penguin Books, 2015), X.

The denial (Joe and Kate) and blindness (Chris) towards family stains is perfectly executed, and their performance and conviction are so spotless that it became their reality. Just as Centola says:

Instead of assuaging his guilt and restoring his son's lost respect and love, Keller's denial of wrongdoing only serves to exacerbate the family crisis and intensify his anguish and alienation ... Kate also lives in denial and resorts to lies and self-deception as a means of contending with her anguish and sorrow.⁸⁸

For this couple, denial is the only way because the truth would wreck them. After such a long time, neither of them is able to face the reality with all the consequences of their secret. Therefore, the pretense and hiding within the community serve as a good escape, and it feeds the lie, which became so rooted that both of them actually believe in it - this lie became their reality.

In the play, Kellers are presented as the core of their surrounding community, however, the hollowness of this picture is shown through staging (plants covers the property as a barrier) and the anxious atmosphere of slowly uncovering secrets that Joe and his wife hold inside them.⁸⁹ These webs of lies rooted in the middle of their home slowly break the human connections and almost blind trust that Chris has for his father. Joe does not trust anybody, and Kate with Chris instinctively trust their individualistic lying husband and father. The stableness behind Joe and these crushing lies is rooted in his belief that he has been doing all that for his family, therefore, it all can all be justified:

⁸⁸ Steven R. Centola, "All My Sons," in *The Cambridge Companion to Arthur Miller*, ed. Christopher Bigsby (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 55-56.

⁸⁹ Anne Crow, "'Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness': Anne Crow investigates Arthur Miller's exploration of the American Dream in his play All My Sons," *The English Review*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2007): 2.

Mother: Joe, Joe . . . it don't excuse it that you did it for the family. Keller: It's got to excuse it!
Mother: There's something bigger than family to him. Keller: Nothing is bigger!⁹⁰

The welfare of his family is the ultimate argument that keeps his consciousness clear(er).⁹¹ According to the *Horowitz list*, Joe's form of denial includes "avoided associations, short-circuiting expected, obvious connections to the event that would follow from the implications of what said or thought."⁹² He got too scared of the consequences and the guilt, so he blocked and wrongfully justified the immorality of his past actions. The results of this complete rejection are the distrust of everything and everyone that could destroy his web of carefully built up lies/his truth.

Chatwal points out that some of Miller's plays are formed around an idea of broken trust and betrayal that leads to an ultimate collapse due to the immorality on the social level and perfidy within the family circle. He says that:

Arthur Miller's plays depict the human tendency of betrayal and guilt which leads to the decay, and degeneration of human values ... The person who has committed the crime tries to justify his betrayal and guilt on the grounds which are not acceptable to the just social system.⁹³

In this particular play, both Joe and his wife have been living under the falsehood for too long, and the shadow under it keeps growing until it suffocated Kate on the inside (her mental sanity and ability to cope with reality), Joe on the outside (commits a suicide), and the whole family inside out. They perform the picture of a spotless family, but, at the end of the play, the price

⁹⁰ Miller, *All My Sons*, 77.

⁹¹ Centola, "All My Sons," in *The Cambridge*, 53.

⁹² Goleman, *Vital Lies*, 52-53.

⁹³ Deepak Chaswal, "Betrayal and Guilt in Arthur Miller's *All My Sons*," *IUP Journal of English Studies*, vol. 6, no. 3 (1 Oct. 2020): 7.

for this fake game is paid with Joe's life, and everyone is torn out from their dreamlands. They lose the stamp of perfectness but gain the truth.

The Dream tells Joe to secure his material accomplishments no matter what because he has to provide for his family.⁹⁴ Since the beginning, he has been doing that for them, for his family; therefore, a valuable and powerful justification is incorporated in Joe's head. In the land of the American Dream, he is a perfect and successful family man.

The impact of his immoral actions is the corrupted core within his family that leads to broken trust. Their fake curtain of perfection goes up at the end of the story when Joe's secrets are uncovered by his remaining son; hence, the wall of distrust appears in front of this household and, because of the lack of communication, crashes the Keller family.

3.3 Death of a Salesman

In probably his most famous play, Miller's second family of this thesis is a group of people who desperately want but also do not want to be together. The lack of trust is written all over the plot, and Willy's hunt for recognition blinds and separates him not only from reality but also from his family, the people who could actually help him on the quest for some deeper need for fulfillment.

Willy is under the influence of *cruel optimism* that feeds him with an insatiable hunger for more, and this emptiness can never be filled because of his rapid fall connected to industrial and business changes, thus, something that Willy can neither understand nor control. He is not

⁹⁴ Keller: For you, a business for you." From Miller, *All My Sons*, 70.

capable of seeing the changing work sphere⁹⁵ just as much he is not able to communicate with his family about his fears.

In the past, the Lomans did play the role of a spotless family, but it all crumbled under the heaviness of expectations and need for perfection.⁹⁶ Artificiality and dishonesty crashed them because the American Dream cannot (in Willy's understanding) bend and adjust to the current problems and setbacks.

In the flashbacks, with his public success and a secret lover, Willy is the perfect prototype of an American man. Together with his picture-perfect family, he fits the standards set by society. Nevertheless, Miller shows the rottenness behind all the propaganda of these fine households and the American Dream through the slow but lethal decay presented in all four members of the Loman family. Bigsby notes that Miller presents:

characters whose hopes and illusions seem instantly recognisable and archetypal. Willy Loman is a man who wishes his reality to come into line with his hopes, a man desperate to leave his mark on the world through his own endeavours and through those of his children.⁹⁷

He measures everything by the norms of the American Dream, and he places it all onto his family. Willy's impact on the sons is immense thus their actions show instability as well, so it can be said that "*Death of a Salesman* is not about one or two individuals; rather it is about a family system, a unit of interlocking relationships, which shapes individual members' behaviors and attitudes."⁹⁸ This household does twist around Willy, who stands in the middle, but none of

⁹⁵ Gary Grieve-Carlson, "Willy Loman's American Dream," in *American Dreams : Dialogues in U.S. Studies*, ed. Miguez, Ricardo, and Universidade Veiga de Almeida (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 198-199.

⁹⁶ Allan Chavkin and Nancy Feyl Chavkin, "Looking at Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* through the Lens of Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection Theory and Family Systems Theory," *The Arthur Miller Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Spring 2015): 30.

⁹⁷ C. W. E. Bigsby, *Arthur Miller : A Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 101.

⁹⁸ Chavkin, "Looking," 28.

the characters is capable of cooperating or even ask for help. Instead, they live under individualism of painful silence interwoven with insults and remorse.

The saddest aspect of this play can be the fact that Willy ultimately did not commit any serious sin (putting adultery on the side); still, his social fall was crushing. He was not able to see anything else, just the desire for success thus the failure hit him even harder. All Loman males are blind towards the love and support they could have had in their family. In their eyes, they have failed because life is not like they envisioned it.⁹⁹ The image of perfection destroyed this family's chance to happiness when the head of the family "has deceived himself into thinking that the values of the family he cherishes are inextricably linked with the values of the business world in which he works."¹⁰⁰ However, he is not able to meet all the requirements, feels defeated and betrayed, and his form of denial, according to the Horowitz list, is the *blocking through fantasy*. This practice means "avoiding reality of its implications by fanciful thoughts of what might have been or could be."¹⁰¹ Partially mental illness, partially result of rejection, Willy is wholly separated from reality and his family; he stands alone in the constantly changing world and drags the family with him through the ever-changing emotions, anger, or pitiful disorientation in his mind.

The parenting mistakes and unstable conditions caused Biff and Happy to know and see their father as a failed individual, point out his mistakes, and blame him for all the misfortunes. Still, in many ways, they behave likewise. Willy is not a proper father figure, mainly due to his shallow and dishonest ideas (suggesting cheating and being unfaithful himself, highlighting money and success). Hence, his two sons grew up with these norms and examples, and from

⁹⁹ Bigsby, *Arthur Miller : A Critical*, 111.

¹⁰⁰ Steven R. Centola, "Family Values In 'Death Of A Salesman,'" *CLA Journal*, vol. 37, no. 1 (1993): 32.

¹⁰¹ Goleman, *Vital Lies*, 52-53.

the beginning, willingly or not, they have been somehow imitating their father. David Riesman describes it as something normal that occurs everywhere where children are in longer contact with adults. The adult models can be anything that can be observed, and this biological development profoundly affects future social maturity.¹⁰² This headlong imitation during childhood imprints some standards and future way of thinking, and the later children's "growth is conceived as a process of becoming an older, and therefore wiser, interpreter of tradition."¹⁰³ From what is seen in the play, the word wiser would not be the best choice for Biff's and Happy's actions and behavior. Their flawed perception and obsession with the American Dream came from their father, and their lives are far from being practical and cheerful. Both sons wonder without some long-term doable life goals¹⁰⁴ in both private and public spheres of life.

Willy wants Biff to become his younger self, and through this targeted influence, Biff is able to uncover the corruption behind the American Dream that his father cherishes so much; still, Biff's self-reliance is connected to selfish individualism, so he got a solid portion of Willy's damaging influence.¹⁰⁵ The second son, Happy, is genuinely lost in the world of wealth and women, and overall, he is his father's copy. For these two, self-reliance is linked to success and recognition. Willy aims higher and wants almost worldwide recognition;¹⁰⁶ Happy craves acknowledgment from his father.¹⁰⁷

The failure within the family is interwoven in every step that these three men take. The lack of communication causes the ultimate fiasco in the private and public fields. Yet, all of

¹⁰² David Riesman, with Nathan Glazer and Reuel Denney, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven and London: Veritas paperback edition, 2020), 210, Apple Books.

¹⁰³ Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*, 212.

¹⁰⁴ "Biff: I don't know what to do with myself. I've always made a point of not wasting my life, and everytime I come back here I know that all I've done is to waste my life." From Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman* (London: Penguin Books, 2015), 17.

¹⁰⁵ Grieve-Carlson, "Willy Loman's American," 197.

¹⁰⁶ Grieve-Carlson, "Willy Loman's American," 198.

¹⁰⁷ Happy: "I'm loosing weight, you notice Pop? ... I'm getting married, Pop, don't forget it. I'm changing everything. I'm gonna run that department before the year is up. You'll see." From Miller, *Death*, 106.

them keep holding on to the promise of a new and better beginning that separates them from the present and past.

The paradox is that this family could have checked all the things from the list of successfully achieved American Dream (or a version of it) - this family could have been harmonious if some communication and mutual understanding had been incorporated, they were so close to owning a house, and because there are three men, getting a job thus making some good money would not have been an issue. Unfortunately, their individualism and rejection, plus the corrupted American Dream and its demands, placed them outside reality and life in general. This displacement created three self-center men with communication issues and wrong values.

There is no universal manual for a harmonious family and success; however, communication and compassion may play a significant role on the way towards a mostly pleasant and fulfilling life. Consequently, the Loman family could have had it, they were always just one grasp from it, but the circle of individualism and high hopes blinded their eyes with the idea of the glorious American Dream and tangled them in a web of a constant hunt for recognition.

The Dream tells Willy to stay on the top because, for him, being forgotten and unimportant is the greatest failure in society. This results in his separation and also rejection in the family circle when none of the male characters trust and support the others. Their pretense of the spotless family disappeared. As an outcome, not even on the surface, there is a possibility of creating the sham of the harmonious, modern household that they performed when Willy was thriving at work, and his sons were young and with potential.

Willy and his Dream hunt affects his two sons, and all three men became dysfunctional dream-catchers flying alone through life of disappointment and rejection.

4. Defensive Daydreaming in Fantasy Lands

... So was I once myself a swinger of birches.
And so I dream of going back to be.
It's when I'm weary of considerations,
And life is too much like a pathless wood
Where your face burns and tickles with the cobwebs

Broken across it, and one eye is weeping
From a twig's having lashed across it open.
I'd like to get away from earth awhile
And then come back to it and begin over.
May not fate willfully misunderstand me ...¹⁰⁸

Escaping reality, swinging on birches back and forward, and the ultimate emptiness and overwhelming feelings, all of this is depicted in Robert Frost's poem *Birches*, where he also highlights the movements in-between reality and an imaginary world that may occur in human's mind when some difficult life situations occur. The movement of swinging on birches is used as a form of escape from reality, from the adult world; a getaway through a child-like activity in its playfulness and simplicity.

Escaping reality is a theme depicted in all three plays. Some characters are inhabiting fantasy lands in their heads or descending into daydreaming, and these acts of fleeing and denial might be connected to the troubling and harsh things occurring in their lives. Key examples of problematic triggers are circumstances like grim living situations connected to financial problems or lies and unstable psychological conditions. Daydreaming comes with some need to escape reality. Within these plays, Williams and Miller create imaginative lands or places where their characters envision all the good things that could happen - some characters close

¹⁰⁸ Robert Frost, *The Collected Poems of Robert Frost*, ed. Edward Connery Lathem (London: Vintage Books, 2013), 121.

their eyes and dream about it, but others project these lands into their reality even though it is just pretense and fake facade.

These mentally created fantasy lands of wealth, stability, and happiness determine the steps of the characters, i.e., individuals who prefer the envisioning process over reality and an endeavor to create something in the real world.

As pleasant as the dreaming may sound, there is the painfully visible banality and impossibility behind some of the dreams; Williams' and Miller's individuals aim towards these tempting ideas and do not learn from the previous situations. In connection to this, Lauren Berlant asks a question about the implied absurdity behind following some universally created pictures of desirable fantasies through attaching to some constructed images of good life.¹⁰⁹

Fantasies and beliefs based on the ideas formed by the American Dream accompany the members of all three families depicted in this thesis. As a result, the fantasizing about the Dream cannot fully stop because it is inscribed inside of the families due to the imitation and taught values. These people search for or hide from a myth that corrupted their household.

The imitators are affected by high hopes or a need for improvement. On their path, every Dream imitator adds something different or extra to the previous hunt for the Dream happening in his/her family; thus, he/she thinks that his/her way must be successful, or he/she has to try at least. The fantasy land hidiers are suffocated by the initial hunt and can neither pick up the Dream nor detach themselves from its burden.

Both groups, active dreamers coming after something better and more prominent and the passive souls resting in their private imagination, are somewhat lost and the fantasy lands inside their heads help them to create a stable and isolated place. Glausiusz reasons that "people who daydream excessively may have the same problems ignoring their thoughts once they get

¹⁰⁹ Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 2.

going. Indeed, extreme daydreamers find their private world so difficult to escape that they describe it as an addiction—one as enslaving as heroin."¹¹⁰ This is visible in the plays when Miller and Williams present characters who feel enslaved by either their families or some social system; both order them to act in a certain way. As a response, some individuals break down mentally and block the negativity and demands coming their way and let themselves be caged by their own abstract creations.

As mentioned in the second chapter,¹¹¹ toxic daydreaming may be caused by trauma, loneliness, guilt, or misunderstanding. In Miller's and Williams' plays, this act of imagination grows into denial or even repression. These two methods of suppressing something unpleasant are defined by Daniel Goleman:

denial is the refusal to accept things as they are. While the entire case is not blotted from awareness, as is done in repression, the facts are realigned to obscure the actual case ... Denial is the common first reaction to devastating loss.¹¹²

It can be assumed that denial and repression may come together to hide something from awareness. As a result, humans' behavior is affected and somehow damaged by it. In her article, Kendra Cherry propose six signs of denial, and, as this chapter will present, the individuals from the three plays exhibit at least one of them:

refuse to talk about the problem, find ways to justify your behavior, blame other people or outside forces for causing the problem, persist in a behavior despite negative consequences, promise to address the problem in the future, avoid thinking about the problem.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Josie Glausiusz, "Living in an Imaginary World," *Scientific American*, uploaded January 1, 2014, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/living-in-an-imaginary-world/>.

¹¹¹ Chapter 2. *The American Dream*, "2.2.2 Defensive Daydreaming in Fantasy Lands," 34.

¹¹² Daniel Goleman, *Vital Lies, Simple Truth: The Psychology of Self-deception* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1998), 20.

¹¹³ Kendra Cherry, "Denial as a Defense Mechanism," *Verywellmind.com*, uploaded May 29, 2021, <https://www.verywellmind.com/denial-as-a-defense-mechanism-5114461>.

Williams and Miller created personas who show some of these signs, and these negative responses adversely interact with common sense and morals. These behavior aspects set the dark undertone in lives of the characters and their detachment from reality is interwoven with the plots.

4.1 The Glass Menagerie

According to Cherry's six signs of denial introduced above, Amanda belongs to the group that keeps justifying her behavior through blaming people around her, Tom either promises to deal with everything in the future or refuses to talk about it, and Laura avoids even thinking about the issues.¹¹⁴

Amanda, Tom, and Laura are professional reality escapers. In this play, daydreaming and the overall confusion within reality is a dominant theme.¹¹⁵ Amanda's nostalgia, Laura's loose connection with ordinary daily life, and Tom's constant dreaming of a poet's career far away connect these three characters on the theme level but separate them as individuals living under one roof. There is the paradox of living closely together in one apartment but being far away mentally. Inside their heads, all three of them undergo mind trips to fictional locations and scenarios - they are ultimate daydreamers. Amanda's nostalgia trips bully Laura and annoy Tom, Tom's absent-mindedness and inability to function in the industrial world upsets Amanda and scares Laura, and Laura's complete surrender of reality terrifies both Amanda and Tom. They do not deal with this in the form of communication; they rather decide to hide from all of

¹¹⁴ Cherry, "Denial."

¹¹⁵ Greta Heintzelman, Alycia Smith-Howard, *Critical Companion to Tennessee Williams* (New York: Facts On File, 2005), 90.

it behind accusations towards each other and inside the escaping rooms in their minds - to drift away seems less painful than some actual communication and understanding.

To master the daydreaming process may not be desirable due to its possibilities of being lost within one's mind. On the other hand, Grieve-Carlson presents a thought that:

There is nothing inherently wrong with dreaming, nor is dreaming necessarily equivalent to lying. To live without dreams is to accept, passively and fatalistically, the conditions of life as given. To dream, in this sense, is to imagine and to establish the pre-conditions for an actual world of human value.¹¹⁶

According to this definition, dreaming can help develop and build imaginary realms within fantasy and act as a helper to coordinate life choices and steps within the reality. The problems begin when maladaptive daydreaming takes over and suffocates common sense and logical reasoning. For Laura, Tom, and Amanda, there is no borderline between healthy envisioning of the future plus calming with pleasant pictures, and the consuming daydreaming. They accuse each other of dreaming or overwhelming nostalgia trips, but none of them is able to acknowledge his/her own flaws and problems.¹¹⁷ Their imagination does not move them forward; it keeps them stuck in misery and despair of the current state.

In Amanda's case, the matter of daydreaming is connected to the toxic nostalgia. In her head, she is stuck in the former times, and this stagnation within timelines enables her to move forward and function more efficiently in the current period. She is a product of the Old South living in America in times of dealing with distress and stasis - she is part of a group of people who are stuck in the past with the inability to move forward and accept the divergence of the

¹¹⁶ Gary Grieve-Carlson, "Willy Loman's American Dream," in *American Dreams : Dialogues in U.S. Studies*, ed. Miguez, Ricardo, and Universidade Veiga de Almeida (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 204.

¹¹⁷ "Amanda: You don't know things anywhere! You live in a dream; a manufacture illusions! ... you selfish dreamer!" From Tennessee Williams, *The Glass Menagerie* (London, Penguin Books, 2009), 85.

everchanging world are lost in nostalgia and filled with remorse, thus, cannot properly function. Through Tom's withdrawal, Williams shows the possibility of some form of survival, which is, unfortunately, sometimes possible only through selfishness.¹¹⁸ Yet, during his life, he is not able to detach either physically (when he lives there) or mentally (keeps coming back in his memories). Tom presents the story of his family; he presents his memories that keep pulling him to the past. The problem of coming back to the past underlines almost everything in the drama.

There is always some reminiscent of the old times that holds back the characters and determines their very often wrong steps. Amanda and Tom are going back to the past but also try to orient their steps towards the future. In both cases, there is the problem of detachment from actuality. With future planning, the problem is that there is and always will be some delay of what they do and the result of their intended or unintended actions and efforts because the results happen at a different time than the start of the intention/planning.¹¹⁹

Amanda and Tom are slaves of the past, present, and future because they cannot detach from some past events and also change or determine their future actions since the decisions are created in a different period than the results or actions. Amanda's standards were formed in the Old South, and now she applies them to her children born in the industrial USA, plus she plans their future, but the conditions are constantly changing according to the situation around them, which cannot be fully predict.

The Wingfield family is lost in mindsets of high hopes and repression. As Heintzelman says:

¹¹⁸ John Lahr, *Mad Pilgrimage of the Flesh: Tennessee Williams* (London: Bloomsbury Paperbacks, 2015), 65.

¹¹⁹ Piotr Sztompka, *Trust: A Sociological Theory* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 18.

none of the characters is truly able to cope with the demands of everyday life; therefore, all seek refuge in their own dream world, to such an extent that illusion itself becomes subjective reality ... But the diversion cannot last, and the conflict between fact and fiction, reality, and make-believe, remains irreconcilable.¹²⁰

When they are at home, in their heads, they all lose themselves around things that make them feel safe(r). Amanda is lost in the sweet Southern Belle past, Laura is polishing her glass collection, and Tom is composing a poem or planning his escape. None of them is fully and truly present because it is a memory play where Tom talks about the past. In his consciousness, Amanda's stories about her former life, which she kept telling repeatedly thus became fixed in Tom's memory, are incorporated as well; therefore, characters in this drama are always suffocated by some past, by some reminders, or standards, or unresolved conflicts.¹²¹ The suffocation by the former times continues through Tom, and his storytelling about his family - all of them are constantly living outside reality, endlessly escaping something or someone.

Throughout the story, it is more than visible that "what Tom is escaping from is the prison of the apartment, dominated by his mother and sister and devoid of privacy, and the sterility of work."¹²² The two females may look like caricatures standing in the middle of a tragedy of Tom's life, but "Amanda demonstrates very clearly that although she may be foolish, she is not stupid,"¹²³ her demeanor is crippled by the knowledge of the undesirable situation at home. Laura, on the other hand, seems utterly detached from any time space; she is "a young

¹²⁰ Greta Heintzelman, Alycia Smith-Howard, *Critical Companion to Tennessee Williams* (New York: Facts On File, 2005), 89-90.

¹²¹ "The strong Agrarian bias in Williams's plays gives them much of their distinct southern flavor and undergirds the elegiac tone ... The Glass Menagerie, the first long work in which Williams made full use of his southern experience, is his most Agrarian play. The Agrarian sentiment appears clearly in the description of the ugly urban surroundings of the Wingfield family... In sharp contrast, Amanda recalls the blooming of jonquils in the Delta." From Charles S. Watson, *The History of Southern Drama* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 177.

¹²² Paller, *Gentlemen Callers*, 38.

¹²³ Michael Paller, *Gentlemen Callers, Tennessee Williams, Homosexuality, and Mid-Twentieth-Century Broadway Drama* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 41.

woman of this world who simultaneously, like the lovely but easily broken creatures of her glass menagerie, seems physically unfit for or unadapted to an earthly life."¹²⁴ Neither can smoothly function in the real world, but their resistance stays venerable, and both are trying to keep the family somewhat together, which only deepens the misery and creates a suffocating environment.¹²⁵

After many years, Tom's body manages to escape; nonetheless, his mind does not. Through this memory play, he shows that he just cannot let go of the two ladies. He is mentally trapped with his family in that small apartment. When he is indeed there, his mind is flying away towards adventure; when he escapes, he mentally comes back - there is always part of him with them and the misery. He was, is, and forever will be bound to that place and people inside it. All his life, he will follow this saying of his: "I'll rise - but I won't shine,"¹²⁶ a sentence that is suitable for not only Tom but also Laura. Both are somehow connected to darkness in a form of an inability to move within society; hence, they cannot entirely or at all function and thrive in the outside world or at home. In this family, all of them are trapped within the walls of dysfunctionality and shadows of their Dreams and desires.

The Dream tells Amanda to maintain her standards, norms, and taught visions from the Old South; it tells her to keep fighting in her dated ways. There is no place for compromising or understanding the new and modern life, or the different Dreams that Tom has, and Laura's lack of interest.

In this closeminded household, these three residents with the same surname dedicate their lives to daydreaming, denial, or even repression because the Dream does not tell them how to react

¹²⁴ Bert Cardullo, "The Blue Rose of St. Louis: Laura, Romanticism, and The Glass Menagerie," in *Bloom's Modern Critical Views: Tennessee Williams*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Bloom's Literary Criticism, 2007), 68.

¹²⁵ Due to Amanda's bullying and controlling and Laura's fragility and indifference towards her social life.

¹²⁶ Tennessee Williams, *The Glass Menagerie* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2009), 25.

to obstacles and resistance. As a result, the Dream tells Tom to selfishly detach from his family because that is the only way how to reach his desires and goals. Through that, he can justify his actions because he sees it as the only possible way, just like Amanda, whose behavior and methods seem appropriate to her. Both have their truth, and this stubbornness and inflexibility create the difficulties between them.

For the Wingfield family, to survive in an intense environment filled with people following different Dreams and behavior patterns is possible only through daydreaming and escaping to old memories; fleeing somewhere where it is safer and less intense.

4.2 All My Sons

Connecting Joe and Kate Keller to Cherry's six signs of denial, Joe is the type that always finds a way how to justify his behavior, or he blames other people outside his family circle. Then there is his wife Kate, who refuses and avoids the problems,¹²⁷ just as Amanda Wingfield. She surrounds herself in nostalgia and remorse over the waste made in her life. These two mothers have to witness some pitiful life choices and life paths of their children that lead them towards doom. With the loss of a son because of poor choices made by her husband, Kate is not capable of facing reality, so she wraps her mind in denial, convincing herself that the son is still alive. For Kate, denial of the facts is less brutal than facing the devastating and ugly truth - denial makes a living next to Joe in their lying reality bearable.

¹²⁷ Cherry, "Denial."

In the previous chapter, Joe Keller was presented as a creator of fake stories and denial, which helps him face daily activities and continue living his life.¹²⁸ His daydreaming is not typical; he is not dreaming about success because he already achieved it (on the surface). In the past, he dreamt about success and wealth, and, through lies and dirty tricks, he managed to obtain some power and position within society. Still, Joe knew that his actions were not spotless and correct; as a result, his consciousness transformed daydreaming to denial and repression because even though his dreams did come true, it was not done according to social and moral norms - which is the core of the problem, and it destroys Joe at the end of the play. As a response to the rotten morals, he is forced to create a backup, a cover that hides the ugly truth of his success.

Creating a cover story is a form of denial as well; covering the unpleasant impulses with something manageable means blocking the true instincts by a distinct plot with the same or similar facts. Through this rationalization and its lies, it becomes real not only to others but also for the teller himself.¹²⁹ Just as Centola highlights the damaging influence of denial when he points out that:

the paradox of denial in *All My Sons* is that not only does denial dehumanize, by nullifying the value of the social contract through the justification of indefensible anti-social acts, but it also intensifies the personal anguish and the irremediable alienation that plunge an individual into despair and bring about his tragic suicide.¹³⁰

This inner guilt blocked by deception and denial places Joe outside reality, into his own land of justification and lies that keep him somewhat stable. The fantasy land of renunciation that Joe and Kate inhabit is based on thick layers of lies and repression. These two people "live in fear of bad news, about their son and about the crime they have conspired to deny, the two

¹²⁸ Chapter 3. *The Spotless Family*, "3.2. All My Sons," 46.

¹²⁹ Goleman, *Vital Lies*, 121,

¹³⁰ Steven R. Centola, "All My Sons," in *The Cambridge Companion to Arthur Miller*, ed. Christopher Bigsby (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 53.

ineluctably connected in their minds."¹³¹ It suffocates everything, even the reality, and Joe with Kate started to believe it. In the play, as Bigsby states:

They all construct fictions that enable them to justify themselves in their own eyes, as much as in the eyes of others. And this, it seems, is equally true of the neighbours and, beyond them, of a society that generates its own myths about innocence.¹³²

The reasons behind Joe's denial come from the past; the preservation of it is connected to the current situation and future - he is always affected by time. Living in-between past and present and constantly trying to ensure a stable future, helps him to justify his actions when for him, the past is long forgotten and the present is looking good, so he just needs to protect this current state for the future. Steven Centola places Joe and his denial under a microscope, and he defines his reasons in a way that:

Keller prefers to see himself as a victim of others. Instead of acknowledging his complicity in the crime that sends unsuspecting pilots to their deaths, he lies about his involvement and denies his personal culpability so that he can preserve his false image of himself and maintain the illusion that he has regained his rightful place in society ... how the impulse to betray and to deny responsibility for others, when left ungoverned, can run rampant and wreak havoc on the individual, his family, and his society - even, perhaps, civilization as a whole. The paradox of denial, therefore, is that the very defense mechanism that is employed to justify the rightness of a socially reprehensible act can ultimately become the exclusive means by which an individual self-destructs.¹³³

The slow uncovering of secrets surrounding Joe is also the slow pathway towards his decay. The denial and repression of guilt do not stand a chance when his son starts to dig into the past, and the wall of pretense starts to crumble under the power of truth. Christ Keller, the one son that survived, plays the role of the denial-breaker when he is consciously trying to pull out his

¹³¹ C. W. E. Bigsby, *Arthur Miller: A Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 84.

¹³² Bigsby, *Arthur Miller: A Critical*, 90.

¹³³ Steven R. Centola, "All My Sons," in *The Cambridge Companion to Arthur Miller*, ed. Christopher Bigsby (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 52, 59.

mother from her fantasy land with two living sons and pure husband, and unconsciously, with his actions and questions, his father from the fantasy land with guiltfree success. Chris is the one who breaks the glass of the fake American Dream. As the returned son, Chris is rather lost in the postwar society. Considering that, Bigsby describes his return from the war. Chris came:

back from the war to a family concerned primarily with its own future and the business of making money, a society in which his neighbours, too, seem to have put idealism aside in the name of a post-war pragmatism. The business of America is, indeed, it seems, business.¹³⁴

The war strongly determines Chris and his understanding of life and the world in general. His father and the American Dream of wealth and power do not resonate with him and the experiences and things that he saw and did during the war. Chris' mind is still affected by the traumas thus his Dream is connected to finding stability and simple life. His aim is to get better, married, and start a family. In his mind, there is only a grain of the corrupted American Dream that his father worships because Chris' journey through life differs from Joe's. Nevertheless, Chris does understand the value and power of money in connection with a good and comfortable life.¹³⁵

The Dream tells Joe to, under all circumstances, cover up the ugly truth behind his success because he has to preserve this prosperous way of life; thus, he creates an image of perfection and projects it into the people around him. He dreamt about glory for his family; he made devastating and cruel decisions; now, he has to justify his actions because, without this reasoning, he would not survive, which he does not because his son pulls him out of this toxic pretense about false justifications and the reality hits Joe in an unbearable way.

¹³⁴ Bigsby, *Arthur Miller : A Critical*, 79.

¹³⁵ "Miller's decision to structure the play around the relationship between a father and son implies a historical logic whereby the assumptions of capitalism are challenged, defeated and replaced by a new generation whose values, forged in wartime, are now to be socially and morally operative in peace." From, Bigsby, *Arthur Miller : A Critical*, 92.

The Dream shows Kate to hide in her guilt and heartbrokenness, surrounds herself with false beliefs and images of her dead son coming back through their door again. Both Joe and Kate created a different image of the world around them, a world where denial crashes reality, and the fulfilled dreams are based on the pureness of hard work and fairness. The Kellers' fantasy land was built on justification, guilt, and remorse that cover up the wreckage and destruction inside this family.

4.3 Death of a Salesman

Miller's play is set in "the unreal world in which the Loman family have taken up residence."¹³⁶ For this family, denial is on a table daily, and the inability to communicate and form doable Dreams creates a barrier between Willy and his two sons. The stubbornness is their doom.¹³⁷

Willy Loman is "a believer in the American dream who struggles with a knowledge of his failure,"¹³⁸ an ultimate worshiper of the illusions connected to the idea of the American Dream. His entire being is wrapped around goals and fantasy visions that suffocate him and his family. Considering Cherry's six symptoms of denial, he is the one that persists in a behavior even though its damaging and has negative undertones.¹³⁹

Willy rejects any other outcomes than the one connected to fulfilling the aspirations - he is the biggest believer of the Dream. His life is tightly connected to these visions, and he cannot separate from the corrupted values. Willy daydreams about his family's success and his

¹³⁶ Bigsby, *Arthur Miller : A Critical*, 104.

¹³⁷ None of them is capable to truly listen, forgive, and understand the other two because they all carry some scars from the past that they are not able to overcome - Willy's jealousy of his brother's success, Biff's discovery of his father's infidelity, Happy's syndrome of being overlooked by the father.

¹³⁸ Bigsby, *Arthur Miller : A Critical*, 100.

¹³⁹ Cherry, "Denial."

mind get overheated, then instead of logical responses, he experiences sudden trips to the past and high hopes about a better future for him and his sons. Sterling summarizes Willy in a way that he:

tries to actualize in his present life the strongly-held beliefs of an idealized American Dream and the American workforce from an irrecoverable past society. He embraces the notion that a salesman can be recognized and revered for his hard work and his personable nature.¹⁴⁰

Willy wobbles between the designed idea of the American Dream and the actual outcomes of it - the one where reality hits and crumbles the unstably embellished designs produced by society. The constructed standards affect Willy and his understanding of reality; moreover, this crippled perception of real life is transferred to his two sons as well, and the overall atmosphere in this family is filled with pressure, expectations, and high hopes. They all seek fulfillment through each other, but none share visions of the Dream - they occupy different fantasy lands.¹⁴¹

All three men of this family have grand visions, but none of them knows how to achieve them. The sons took over the father's Dreams, but the steps that Willy made were not very practical and explanatory; he did not set good examples.¹⁴² They grew up within a dysfunctional family that was based on shallow and materialistic values. As a result, both sons are damaged by the lack of healthy role models who would set an excellent example of work-life and social connections because Willy, the supposed role model, can be labeled as a proud, selfish man who treats others with almost no respect and highlights the importance of commodities and power,¹⁴³ thus, not somebody adequate to follow.

¹⁴⁰ Eric Sterling, *Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman* (Amsterdam: Brill Rodopi, 2008), 53.

¹⁴¹ Willy wants to be acknowledged and mean something in society, Happy wants to be acknowledged by his father, Biff wants to do things differently than his father and wants to break out from the Dream that destroyed his father and already control his brother. This is presented in "Requiem" in Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman* (London: Penguin Books, 2015), 110-111.

¹⁴² Steven R. Centola, "Family Values In 'Death Of A Salesman,'" *CLA Journal*, vol. 37, no. 1 (1993): 38.

¹⁴³ Robert D. Putman, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 792, Apple Books.

Willy consumed the values and standards presented by society, and his ultimate goal is to entirely inhabit them, to be the walking example of these universal norms - it became his identity, it devoured him together with his family. He is lost somewhere in between being aware but also completely denying everything in his life. He is always searching for something that he does not have, but he actually does not know what he wants.¹⁴⁴ Hence, "Willy's double failure, as a salesman and as a man who has surrendered freedom and dignity to a fantasy,"¹⁴⁵ controls and suffocates him and his family. At the end, he loses it all but also frees himself from the strict borders of the fantasies of the Dream. Willy frees himself through suicide and leaves his family behind with remorse, and unanswered questions.

The Dream tells Willy to never give up, even when his mind does, and his body gets older and weaker. He is constantly insecure, and this low self-esteem shakes his everyday steps and blind his short-distance vision where his family stands. The eyes of Willy always aim higher and broader, somewhere into his vision world filled with fame. The Dream is perfectly envisioned in Willy's mind, and this image is something genuinely spotless. But he can never reach this perfection in the real world; thus, he gets lost somewhere in between pitiful high hopes and surrender. Through Willy, the Dream tells his sons to follow it as well, to try to accomplish what their father could not, to try to redeem his mistakes. All three are victims of high hopes and some need for recognition.

¹⁴⁴ Bigsby, *Arthur Miller : A Critical*, 100-101, 114.

¹⁴⁵ Bigsby, *Arthur Miller : A Critical*, 110.

5. Money as a Bitter Bellwether

In going from room to room in the dark,
I reached out blindly to save my face,
But neglected, however lightly, to lace
My fingers and close my arms in an arc.
A slim door got in past my guard,
And hit me a blow in the head so hard
I had my native simile jarred.
So people and things don't pair any more
With what they used to pair with before.¹⁴⁶

In this poem called *Door in the Dark*, Robert Frost presents a person lost within some space, space that is changing, is different from the one that he or she used to know. This individual is groping in the dark with his hands down, with no protection, and the territory surrounding him seems to be rather unwelcoming and dangerous than inviting.

This relatively dismal poem closes this thesis with a chapter that shows the three families as receipts floating in the sea of greed and false values, in a place where the American Dream keeps feeding society with luxurious eye-catching illusions but with no protection offered in the phases of darkness. Lost and lonely in the shadows are the feelings that Amanda, Tom, Joe, and Willy with his two sons feel when they move within the given space, within reality declared by the Dream.

In society, money seems to be the determiner of wealth and success - a bitter bellwether - and, in general, people seem to be highlighting and judging this aspect of life daily. Money can provide some form of control over life and time - it creates a level of independence. Also,

¹⁴⁶ Robert Frost, *The Collected Poems of Robert Frost*, ed. Edward Connery Lathem (London: Vintage Books, 2013), 265.

people enjoy sending wealthy signals towards others to present their success through cars, houses, or other luxurious items.¹⁴⁷

The desire for a house was firmly embedded in the heads of American families in the 1950s, and these debts connected to housing were the determining points that made the lives of people complicated - they were slaves of loans and other kinds of payments associated with the image of a good life.¹⁴⁸

Children react to the impulses around them; hence, the problems connected to finances and the fear or greed associated with it may lead to a lack of trust among the household, which might cause the decay of these families. Parents' traumas transfer into the family atmosphere, and suspicion, distrust, or some pathological behavior replace the trusting stimulus.¹⁴⁹ Overall, all three families of this thesis lack trust within each other, and the children are damaged goods of their parents who transfer negativity, fears, and false values on them. The financial instability with gaining capital play a notable role in these households when it raises questions behind all steps made by the characters who are constantly judged and watched by society.

Arthur Miller was a critic of society and, as he presented in some of his essays,¹⁵⁰ when some individuals do not fit within the set boundaries created by society, he or she has to die, literally or figuratively. In his two plays depicted in this thesis, both fathers who sinned or failed in the public sphere take their own lives. For them, it is the only possible next step because society would not accept them in this broken state. Their sons are left behind, alone and damaged, with no solid grounds and direction. The decay and damnation of individuals apply

¹⁴⁷ Morgan Housel, *The Psychology of Money: Timeless Lessons of Wealth, Greed, and Happiness* (Petersfield: Harriman House, 2020), 163, 166, 178-179, Apple Books.

¹⁴⁸ Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 240, Apple Books.

¹⁴⁹ Piotr Sztompka, *Trust: A Sociological Theory* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 98.

¹⁵⁰ Arthur Miller, "On Society and Politics," in *Collected Essays* (New York: Penguin Books, 2016), 311-518.

to Williams' Wingfield clan as well because its members are standing outside the desirable system, thus, do not serve properly to society.

Under these circumstances, if the product does not fit or function, the system, sometimes based on the American Dream's values, does not need its service anymore - it becomes useless for the higher purposes seen and set by the public sphere because the value is judged and measured by public acceptance.¹⁵¹ As a result, all improper individuals are despised and neglected by society; they are left alone in their despairs.

5.1 The Glass Menagerie

Money, or rather the lack of finances, chase the Wingfield family. The absence of the father puts an enormous burden upon not only Amanda's but also Tom's shoulders when both have to work somewhere beneath their level (in their eyes) - both perceive the employment as a necessity rather than fulfillment and personal growth.

For the most part, money has been a significant stress-maker, and many surveys have proven that lack of finances may create significant pressure on families that may lead to depression and overwhelming stress.¹⁵² In the Wingfield family, in a household without a father, income is an issue that distresses Amanda because she cannot fully provide for her and the two other members. As the only man in the house, Tom has a job and tries to bring some stable cash every month, which secures basic needs like electricity. Without this monthly financial package, Amanda would not be able to fully function at home. As a result of this pitiful condition, they

¹⁵¹ Arthur Miller, "On Social Plays," in *Collected Essays* (New York: Penguin Books, 2016), 76-77.

¹⁵² Sophie Bethune, "Money Stress Weighs on Americans' Health," *American Psychological Association*. Vol. 46, No. 4. (2015), <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2015/04/money-stress>.

are slaves of every cent that they manage to get, and their employment makes them desperate even more.¹⁵³

The financial distress affects this family, and its members show some of the common responses summarized by the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. Amanda's demeanor shows a high level of anxiety, confusion, or, for example, overwhelming levels of stress. Tom and his alcohol abuse and depression, and Laura with her feelings of detachment and confusion fall into these categories as well. In addition, all three of them feel somehow surreal, and their responses to everyday situations are underlined either with grief, panic, or detachment.¹⁵⁴ These responses and behavior are not just connected to the financial trouble, yet they do sit somewhere in the middle of the dysfunctionality of this family. Inhabiting a space with this level of issues is slightly problematic,¹⁵⁵ and it does not help the struggles besides the finances. An unfortunate result of living under these conditions is family separation,¹⁵⁶ which does happen when Tom leaves and, on a mental level, has been happening even when they live together.

Their living arrangement is far from the American myth of the perfect family where every household has a caring mother who is perfectly organized and ready to place everything and everyone in order.¹⁵⁷ This family keeps struggling with the threat of poverty and oblivion. Even at the end of the play, when Tom stands as a time capsule of the Wingfield family, it is not explicitly said whether Amanda and Laura fall into the poverty or whether they manage to ensure some income. In the case of oblivion, until Tom holds them in his memory, a piece of

¹⁵³ C.W.E. Bigsby, "Entering The Glass Menagerie," in *The Cambridge Companion to Tennessee Williams*, ed. Matthew C. Roudané (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997), 34-35.

¹⁵⁴ AAMFT, "Financial Distress & the Family," *American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy*, Accessed 5.7.2021, https://aamft.org/Consumer_Updates/Financial_Distress.aspx.

¹⁵⁵ For example, generation differences, expectations, lack of communication, and excessive daydreaming provoke arguments, fighting, and an intense atmosphere.

¹⁵⁶ AAMFT, "Financial."

¹⁵⁷ Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, 544.

them manages to stay. Nonetheless, money will always determine this family's fate due to its connection to the daily necessities and basic survival in the industrial world.

In the end, all three characters undergo inevitable awakening when "Laura's dreams are crushed, Amanda faces reality, and Tom breaks free physically while remaining haunted by his betrayal of his tragically innocent sister."¹⁵⁸

The absence of trust, security, and stability within the Wingfield family is the foremost necessity that they have lacked since the first page. Without stability, the whole household is filled with uncertainty that divides members of the Wingfield family and lures them into the fantasy lands where money, work, or relationships do not oscillate within the vicious circle of loneliness, despair, and alienation.¹⁵⁹ The lack of money, understanding, and truthfulness disrupts the household.

At the end of the story, the Wingfield family is ripped out from fantasy lands by the lack of financial means. For this family, the wreckage of the American Dream depicted in this thesis means total separation of the family members. At first glance, this household does not seem to be chasing some marvelous pieces of the Dream, but some norms, visions, and desires are determined by it;¹⁶⁰ thus, they do follow shadows or reflections of the Dream.¹⁶¹

The Dream tells Amanda to secure money, to secure at least something for her children, something that can give them and her some stability within the new and strange industrial South that seems so chaotic and illogical to her. Her ways are linked to the old South and her childhood and youth when many things connected to a simple life seemed easier - she probably had money

¹⁵⁸ Jacqueline Foertsch, *American Culture in the 1940s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 109-110.

¹⁵⁹ Bigsby, "Entering," 32-33.

¹⁶⁰ Tom dreams about being an artist, Amanda chases stability and a good life for her and the children - both think that they do deserve something better.

¹⁶¹ Amanda follows the outdated Southern Belle Dreams, Tom, with his desire to become a poet, pursues the Dream idea that everyone can become anything.

and male protection. However, these norms and values applied to the children, the products of financial distress, cannot stand a chance because there is no possible way to connect with them. All three of them are just too different and distant that not even sharing the same last name can save this family and, in the end, the problem of money even deepens with Tom's exit from the household. So for Amanda, money is the anthem of¹⁶² a constant reminder of the awful situation that she and Laura are in, something that they never have enough of in the first place.

5.2 All My Sons

Money and wealth seem to be Joe's lever for justification. In his head, he created a scenario that all he ever wanted to do was secure the family through his business and follow the American Dream path that he was taught to pursue. As a result, "the language of material success blots out the language guilt."¹⁶³ His financial stability and safety of the family cover up the possible guilt with the process of his justifications. To maintain this pretense and act normal in society, Joe has to put all his trust to the strength of his lies and distrust into everyone else - all the possible threats that could uncover his ugly truth. He does not know what happens in the future, and that gives him the unsolid grounds in his life, and the dependence on trusting his lies and distrusting others is what he leans on because the uncertainty gives hope but also fear - the trust highlights the confidence but also carry the anxiety.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Going back to the Lana Del Rey song "National Anthem," from chapter 2 2.2.3 *Money as a Bitter Bellwether* page 26, where she sings "money is the anthem of success."

¹⁶³ C. W. E. Bigsby, *Arthur Miller : A Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 87.

¹⁶⁴ Sztompka, *Trust*, 19.

Joe Keller and his family do not have financial worries. On the surface, there are the achievers of the Dream. Their dysfunctionality, secrets, and instability stem from how Joe ensured the money, the wrongdoing and betrayal he did to make sure that the Keller family will have some secure capital thus stable life. His words aim to that as well; he repeats and reminds his son and wife that it was all for them:

Keller: ...what the hell did I work for? That's only for you, Chris, the whole shooting'- match is for you!¹⁶⁵

Joe justifies his ruthless business behavior, and he is not able to see anything wrong behind his actions and that argument. Under this light, Deepak Chaswal presents not such a positive description of Joe and his role within society when he says that:

Joe is a hardcore businessman for whom money is everything. He is the representative of American materialistic attitude. He is a symbol of American capitalism, which grows and multiplies its wealth as a result of exploitation of the workers.¹⁶⁶

This is accurate because Joe does leave destruction behind him on the path towards wealth and power. Joe's whole existence is wrapped around his need to preserve money and business. As Bigsby depicts in his book, Joe lives in a space where is:

a house in which money had been a determinant and family a defining term. Indeed, the word 'money' recurs throughout the play, as a kind of counterpoint to the idealism generated by the war. Character after character invokes it as a reason for relinquishing ideals or hopes.¹⁶⁷

For this family, wealth made during the war is both beneficial and rotten. Every step made is underlined with this money, and even though Kate and Chris do express some hostile or

¹⁶⁵ Arthur Miller, *All My Sons* (London: Penguin Books, 2015), 17.

¹⁶⁶ Deepak Chaswal, "Betrayal and Guilt in Arthur Miller's *All My Sons*," *IUP Journal of English Studies*, vol. 6, no. 3 (1 Oct. 2020): 9.

¹⁶⁷ Bigsby, *Arthur Miller : A Critical*, 82.

unbiased feelings towards their family wealth,¹⁶⁸ in the end, all of them live, work, and function from this account. So "the play may express regret, through several characters, that money has become a primary determinant, but it is money that Chris promises to Ann,"¹⁶⁹ it is the luxury of the house and life in it that Kate exploits. All three of them trust the money, they believe that this wealth of theirs will keep the life solid and secure. Some may not like this cash but still fully use its advantages and power.

Joe trusts the money and financial stability; he gives everything into his business and values it more than morals and ethics. Society and its creation of the values of the American Dream fuels the materialistic consciousness that taught Joe self-centeredness and detached him from other people. It can all be applied to Willy as well because even his consciousness became suffocated by these visions and values.¹⁷⁰

Both Miller's men misunderstand the aspects of the Dream connected to interpersonal relationships. The Dream teaches "rugged individualism and self-reliance, on the one hand, and on the other hand Miller's 'system of love,' which involves a kind of communitarian concern and respect for others."¹⁷¹ For Joe and Willy, there is only the bigger picture, what society sees, what keeps them financially stable, and all the family values and respect do not bother them too much or do not exist at all.

The Dream tells Joe to maintain all the gathered possessions, power, and wealth to stay on top. The voice of the Dream helps him to justify all the atrocities towards other human

¹⁶⁸ "Chris: The business! The business doesn't inspire me ... I felt wrong to be alive, to open the bank-book, to drive the new car, to see the new refrigerator ... Keller: You wanted money, didn't you? Mother: I didn't want it that way ... Joe Joe ... it don't excuse it that you did it for the family." From Miller, *All My Sons*, 17, 36, 76-77.

¹⁶⁹ Bigsby, *Arthur Miller: A Critical*, 93.

¹⁷⁰ Gary Grieve-Carlson, "Willy Loman's American Dream," in *American Dreams: Dialogues in U.S. Studies*, ed. Miguez, Ricardo, and Universidade Veiga de Almeida (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 204.

¹⁷¹ Grieve-Carlson, "Willy Loman's," 205.

beings. Money is his anthem; he places money over human lives, money over individuals. Out of the three families and its members, Joe is the one that got the closest to the Dream; he reached the artificial wealth, social position, and recognition. Nonetheless, it was all done by deception, and lots of damage was left behind this path of his. So, for Joe, money is also the anthem of guilt and a path towards death.

5.3 Death of a Salesman

As mentioned above, Willy and his misinterpretations of the Dream make him a self-centered seeker of triumph and recognition when he himself does not honestly care about the others and takes advantage of their love and respect towards him.¹⁷² A paradox connected to this is an example of Willy's demeanor when there were no family and financial struggles.¹⁷³ During that time, when the Loman family had money and enjoy each other's company, Willy was not able to truly see and value his years of glory. Instead, he kept wanting more, was unfaithful, and taught wrong values to his sons. His greed and the need for appreciation were insatiable. After the incident with Biff, Willy lost his biggest life cheerleader, and he could not function as before. Then, the work sphere changed, and he was needed neither by his sons nor at work - he faced total rejection.

His responses to financial distress are confusion, and detachment; he cannot sleep properly, and there are overwhelming levels of stress.¹⁷⁴ All of these are not only caused by the lack of money, but also his illness¹⁷⁵ plays its role. Just like with Amanda, the financial stress and desire for being acknowledged connected to fame play a significant role in his conditions.

¹⁷² Grieve-Carlson, "Willy Loman's," 202.

¹⁷³ When Biff and Happy were children and Willy was a successful salesman.

¹⁷⁴ AAMFT, "Financial."

¹⁷⁵ Hallucinations and the overall instability of thoughts and focus.

The three Loman men do acknowledge the paradox behind the race for recognition and success and their actions, but they are not able to see the real problem, thus, stop their suffering:

Willy: Work a lifetime to pay off a house. You finally own it, and there's nobody to live in it.

Biff: I don't know - what I'm supposed to want" "To suffer fifty weeks of the year for the sake of a two-week vacation.

Happy: ... don't know what the hell I'm workin' for. Sometimes I sit in my apartment - all alone... I'm lonely¹⁷⁶

All three men see and recognize the corrupted money hunt at employment, but the tragedy is that none tries to escape the circle of the American Dream; they continue living in the circulation of money. They keep surviving on high hopes and new designs that only deepen the misery and do not help them get out. Willy's public and private worlds merged into one when he began to perceive values created by society as his own.¹⁷⁷ Willy wants everything that the Dream represents; he is a product of the Dream since he dedicates his entire life to pursuing happiness based on the constructed idyllical values like owning a house and being successful.

The excessive admiration of some past actions of his brother locks Willy in the corrupted Dream even more. This obsession with someone else's success and trying to follow some specific experience is not the recipe for success because mirroring specific events is almost impossible.¹⁷⁸ Willy fixates his mind on the idea that his brother got rich quickly and easily, so he and his sons should not have a problem doing that as well; the Dream is advertised as a universal possibility for all the hard workers, and that is one of the first concepts that leads him to the negative conviction of entitlement to the American Dream.

¹⁷⁶ Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman* (London: Penguin Books, 2015), 10, 16, 17.

¹⁷⁷ Bigsby, *Arthur Miller : A Critical*, 100.

¹⁷⁸ Housel, *The Psychology*, 230.

The doom of his is sealed when Willy perceives himself as a product that has to be sold to society.¹⁷⁹ His mind goes around the concept of having more money, selling and gaining all that is possible. Having this state-created vision of the Dream and himself forms a never-ending problem of greed and satisfaction because money is not limited; people can always obtain more money. In this sense, there is never a limit¹⁸⁰ and Willy can always reach for more (money flow does not seem to have a finish line). The core of the problem is that he is part "of a culture that proposes as a national mission the pursuit of happiness and then confuses this with material possessions, as did the Founding Fathers who debated whether happiness and property were synonymous."¹⁸¹

The result of Willy's hunt for wealth are two sons with no clear idea about how to behave in society or in the work sphere and their mother, a person, who is, as Foertsch puts it:

drained by a life of self-sacrifice in the service of three self-absorbed men, 'can't cry' at Willy's burial, until she confronts the irony and shame of his having killed himself to collect insurance money, enabling her to live debt-free but alone from now on.¹⁸²

Hence the silent sufferer who has been trying to keep the family somehow together for years, but all the effort made for her men was pointless because, at the end of the play, there is only a broken family standing alone next to a grave of a professional dreamer for whom his family was not enough.

The Dream tells Willy to value capital more than bilateral human connections. He hunts money, participates in the race for recognition, and cannot see and accept the love that is in his

¹⁷⁹ Steven R. Centola, "Family Values In 'Death Of A Salesman,'" *CLA Journal*, vol. 37, no. 1 (1993): 33.

¹⁸⁰ "There is always 'more' money to obtain to spend on 'more' material and experiential things." From Eric Roberge, "Money Is A Tool, So Stop Treating It As The Goal," *Forbes.com*, published May 27, 2015, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ericroberge/2015/05/27/money-is-a-tool-so-stop-treating-it-as-the-goal/?sh=787c7ba299d9>.

¹⁸¹ Bigsby, *Arthur Miller : A Critical*, 103.

¹⁸² Foertsch, *American Culture*, 111.

closest circle of people. The Dream puts him on a path of loneliness because, in his head, he cannot see anything until he has the success, the fame, and the possessions that matter in the materialistic world. This mindset of his influences the parenting, and his two sons are a twisted product of Willy's version and vision of the American Dream. For him, money is the anthem of recognition because he built the system of values around success and wealth that he measured through capital.

Conclusion

Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.¹⁸³

Desire and hatred, both with the capacity to destroy lives; that is what Robert Frost's truly negative poem *Fire and Ice* states - it laments about the end of the world. For characters of the three plays described in this thesis, the American Dream meant distress and problems connected to the desires and negative emotions that led them towards some form of an end - some end of their personal and known world.

The word *Dream* has been used several times, but not in connection with something positive and motivating towards improvement or happiness. In the three dramas, Dreams are rather vague and related to miserable current living conditions: the desperate desire for improvement or eternal stability. Wingfield, Keller, and Loman families' Dreams led them towards dismal endings; every Dream symbolizes a certain end of something or somebody.

The paradox is that for each character created by Miller and Williams, this noun means some form of freedom; they dream about and envision either financial independence or freedom of choice (living life as they please). In America, independence is a concept that has been interwoven in the nation's mentality since the early settlers, and the impact of this legacy is

¹⁸³ Robert Frost, *The Collected Poems of Robert Frost*, ed. Edward Connery Lathem (London: Vintage Books, 2013), 220.

visible even in postwar times. This creation resting in unconscious minds corresponds with the promoted need for self-reliance of many American citizens hence the basis of the Dream.

Nonetheless, the American Dream creates a certain pressure and, with the sorrowful storylines, both Miller and Williams foster the sense of something inherently destructive in the idea of the Dream when each play presents a melancholic or tragic ending; the influence of the American Dream is revealed in the three dramas through the examination of their behavior in connection with the socially constructed norms. Due to this analysis and comparison, the universality and variants of the damaging influence of the Dream were detectable. All plays emphasized the problematic standards occurring in American society, which showed the ongoing obstacles of the idea of freedom and success for all.

The constructed concept of some right for self-improvement and unlimited happiness affecting the everyday life exists in the three dramas, but while Miller closes his two plays with tragic suicides, Williams is more enigmatic with his implications and possible outcomes connected to the negativity and sadness of the ending of the Wingfield family. Miller shows death as the only step for the corrupted father figures. On the other hand, Williams only implies some downbeat ending when he displays his characters in a melancholy non-improving atmosphere. These rather negative closers clash with the idealized Dream promoted in America and show the realness behind the failure and dysfunctional families; it is a perfect counterpart to the TV families streamed through television channels in the 50s.¹⁸⁴

Miller's two nuclear families show disruption just as much as Williams' single-parent one. Wingfield, Loman, and Keller households represent and display the comprehensive problem coming from the private sphere affecting the public one as well. Therefore, the designed roles

¹⁸⁴ Chapter 2. *The American Dream*, "2.2.1 The Spotless Family," 30.

in society work faultlessly with the American Dream's values, creating a perfect base for propaganda.

The dramas share the topic of dysfunctional US families damaged by the American Dream; still, there are differences in human behavior and atmospheres in the three families. While Kellers live in mostly argument-free households, Wingfields and Lomans cannot manage a day without arguing and fighting. In these discussed plays, Miller and Williams depict families with complex environments where each individual destroys the others by the self-related demeanor and zero communication. The sentence "Why am I trying to become what I don't want to be?"¹⁸⁵ relates to the socially constructed roles and promoted visions that combine perfectly with the American Dream's standards; this sentence indicates the similarities between the three plays. As depicted in the stories, Amanda, Tom, Joe and Willy with their sons, do follow some prescribed path towards success, recognition, or freedom. Amanda and Willy both long for recognition and attention, Willy and Joe value money and success more than morals or their family members, and Joe and Amanda excuse their destructive behavior and actions with an allusion that they do it all for their family; for shared contentment and safety. Williams' characters are dreamers who do not fit in the modern world. On the other hand, Miller modeled his individuals according to the myth of the American Dream and its materialistic values. Both depict a lack of success and grasping for a position in society. The generality of the notes on dysfunctional families equated to the American Dream is connected to individualism and high hopes.

This thesis aimed to introduce the topic of families that are dysfunctional due to the influence of the corrupted American Dream. The three chosen plays present households where

¹⁸⁵ Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman* (London: Penguin Books, 2015), 105.

problems like self-centeredness, lack of communication or sympathy occur daily, and these issues have their roots in the corrupted values of the Dream. Amanda, Joe, and Willy, the three parents standing in the center of the plays, share behavior similarities, and because of their actions, the families fall into disharmony leading them towards some form of miserable ending. Comparable aspects can be found in, for example, Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, a play about a truly malfunctioning family coming after wealth and dwelling in the past. Leaving Miller and Williams on the side, similar features can be found in the plays like Lillian Hellman's *The Little Foxes*, and Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*, which show the damaging effects of the American Dream on a family. The unhealthy interpersonal behavior or interaction within a family and corrupt ideas of the American Dream can also be traced there; thus, these works can be joined to the research already done in this thesis. For its purposes, the essay about repression by Freud, Emerson's notes on individualism and self-reliance, or, for example, other studies on social and family psychology¹⁸⁶ can be used to develop the already mentioned outcomes of the Dream.

The unfortunate topicality and universality of the issues connected to wealth, distressing re-living of past events, or maladaptive daydreaming come together with the values of the American Dream; its hidden threats. These rather horrid outcomes and alarming faiths of families are, indeed, linked to the pursuit of the Dream; the hunt for something desirable. Both Miller and Williams delineated this hardship of individuals thus brought various examples of the suffering caused by the constructed segments of the American Dream, which has been reformed according to the current demands of society. As a result, not only in the works of Miller and Williams, the problematic sides of something perfectly looking can be found hence depict the perilously constructed creations of civilization.

¹⁸⁶ For example, John D. DeLamater, and Daniel J. Myers, *Social Psychology* (Belmont: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2011), William M. Pinsof, and Jay L. Lebow, *Family Psychology: The Art of of the Science* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2005).

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